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ISSUE 447 | 15 – 28 APRIL 2015
Your friendly guide to technology

Should MPs get free iPads? Vote now p8

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page 50

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From the Editor

As a child growing up in the Eighties, I used to find lots of TV thrillingly scary, from the Daleks of *Doctor Who* to the killer plants in *The Day of the Triffids* (the latter's credits really were terrifying: www.snipca.com/15976). But my Dad always claimed that he was exposed to far more frightening telly back in the Fifties, namely the *Quatermass* series. I've since downloaded it, and have to admit he was right. It's one of the classic shows and films we reveal how to record from the web in our Cover Feature (page 50). I hope you find some lost treasures.

Before I go, I've got some good news. Following huge demand from readers, we've ordered a new batch of the 2013 Back Issue CD, which you can now buy on Amazon (visit www.snipca.com/16010 or search for 'computeractive cd 2013'). The 2014 CD is still on sale (www.snipca.com/14981), though it's selling fast.

Daniel Booth
editor@computeractive.co.uk

THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

£200,000
Annual cost of giving every MP a free iPad and laptop – *p8*

12 hours
Battery life of the 'almost flawless' Asus ZenBook UX305 – *p22*

50 miles
Directions you get for free in TomTom's relaunched app – *p44*

HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLs

We use snipcas to turn long URLs that are hard to type into ones that are short and simple. They aren't websites themselves, which means they won't be recognised if you type them into Google. Instead, you need to type them into your browser address bar, then press Enter. Doing this will take you to the correct website.

Contents

15 – 28 April 2015 • Issue 447

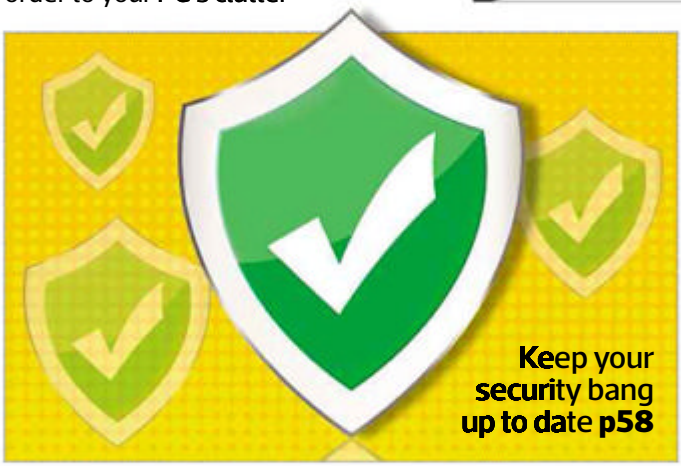
In this issue...

50 Record classic TV & film from the web
Track down and save your all-time favourites online

57 Things to do with an old XP PC - Part 2
Make a home entertainment centre

58 Never miss another security update
Get updates and fixes quickly to keep your system safe

60 Sort out your messy files and folders
Use these tools and tricks to bring order to your PC's clutter



In every issue...

6 News

9 Question of the Fortnight
When will robots take over from humans?

10 Letters

12 Consumeractive

14 Protect Your Tech

16 Best Free Software
AdwCleaner 4.200

30 Buy It!

32 Competition
Win a TP-LINK TD-W8980 dual-band router

49 What's All the Fuss About? Solid-state batteries

64 Problems Solved

70 Fast Fixes
Microsoft Word

73 Jargon Buster

74 The Final Straw
Stuart Andrews has a harsh word with himself

Stuart sees the error of his ways **p74**

Subscribe NOW!
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Asus ZenBook UX305 **p22**

Canon Maxify MB5050 **p26**

Panasonic Lumix GM5 **p28**

Reviews

18 Dell Venue 8 7840
This flawed Dell tablet fails to measure up

20 LG G Flex 2
A self-repairing curved phone

21 Sony QX1
Odd add-on camera for smartphones

22 Asus ZenBook UX305
A brilliant ultra-portable laptop that carries all before it

23 HP Stream 11
A low-cost, low-performance laptop

24 HP Colour LaserJet Pro M277
A user-friendly colour MFP

26 Canon Maxify MB5050
A good little MFP for the price

27 Cities: Skylines
Build your own virtual city

28 Panasonic Lumix GM5
Pocket-sized camera with interchangeable lens

29 Toshiba Kira 107
A sleek laptop, but nothing new here

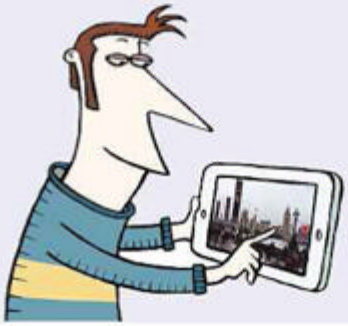
Workshops & Tips

14 pages of brilliant workshops and expert tips

35 Make amazing panoramas from your photos

38 Take screenshots using Windows

40 Edit videos on your iPad



42 Create a fake virus to test your PC's security

43 Readers' Tips
Set hotkeys for Skype actions

44 Phone and Tablet Tips
Dictate long text messages

46 Make Windows Better
Make your mouse easier to use

47 Make Office Better
Create an Outlook folder for emails with attachments

48 Secret Tips For... Pixlr

Computeractive offer of the fortnight

Kaspersky Internet Security 2015 page 68

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News

The top stories in the world of technology

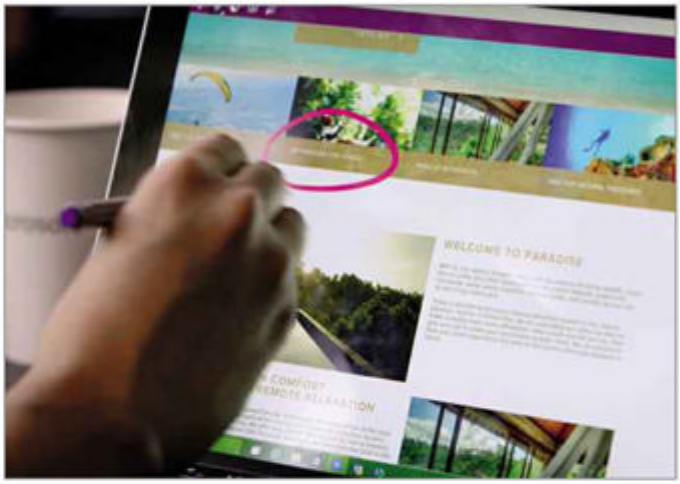
Hello Spartan! Microsoft's new browser makes its debut

Microsoft's new browser, codenamed Spartan, has made its debut in the latest version of the Windows 10 Technical Preview, called Build 10049.

The browser will eventually replace Internet Explorer (IE), although the latter will still be available in Windows 10. Microsoft hopes Spartan will win back the millions of people who switched from IE to Firefox and Chrome.

Writing on the Windows blog (www.snipca.com/16029), Microsoft's Joe Belfiore said that Spartan "is fast, compatible and built for the modern web". The company's intention is to make a browser that contains fewer features than IE, and looks more minimal.

However, Spartan will contain several key features that IE lacks, some of which are available in the version now available. This includes the ability to annotate web



pages, which Microsoft calls 'inking'. Using your keyboard or a stylus (see image), you can type or write notes, and highlight areas.

This version of Spartan also contains Reading List, a tool that lets you save web pages and PDFs to read later, and Reading View, which removes any unnecessary content from a web page, such as adverts, letting you see only text and relevant images.

But Belfiore warned that this version of the browser is not "a polished, ready-for-everyone release". It also lacks a browsing history, and contains some flaws.

At the time of going to press, Build 10049 was available only to people on the Fast 'ring' of Windows 10 updates. To see which ring you're on, click the Start menu in Windows 10, Settings, 'Update & recovery' then 'Advanced options'.

We'll explain how to use Spartan in a Workshop in Issue 448, out Wednesday 29 April.

COMMENT

Using Spartan for the first time feels strange because it looks so basic compared with Internet Explorer (IE). That's not a criticism of Spartan though, more a comment on how messy IE has become. We like Spartan's features, especially the Reading View which de-clutters web pages so thoroughly they're as easy on the eye as ebook pages. But no amount of clever tools will compensate for a browser that's slow and prone to crashing, flaws that plague IE. If Spartan avoids these, it has a bright future.

Google's Chromebit turns your TV into a PC

Google has launched a dongle that plugs into an HDMI slot to turn any display, such as your TV, into a computer running the Chrome operating system.

The Chromebit, made by Asus, will go on sale in the US this summer priced $100. It comes in blue, silver or orange, contains 2GB of memory, a USB 2.0 port and support for Wi-Fi 802.11ac and Bluetooth. Google says it's "smaller than a candy bar".

You'll need to attach a mouse and keyboard via USB or Bluetooth to use your TV as a PC.

The Chromebit's closest rival will be Intel's forthcoming Compute Stick (see 'What's All the Fuss About?', Issue 442), which comes with Windows 8.1. Google hasn't confirmed whether the Chromebit will be on sale in the UK, but it's likely to arrive here by the end of 2015.

You'll like this...
Netflix wants to remove international TV restrictions (www.snipca.com/16035)

... but not this
One in 10 children aged 12 and 13 fear they are addicted to web porn (www.snipca.com/16039)

New smart plug tells you if an elderly relative needs help

A smart plug has been launched to help you keep track of relatives and friends who may need regular assistance.

The 3rings plug sends an alert to your phone, tablet or computer when the person you're monitoring fails to switch on a kettle, television or other frequently used electrical device during a set time period – all of which may indicate they require urgent help.

To set it up, you plug the device into 3rings, then plug that into an electrical socket. It's been developed by Cheshire-based company Assistage (www.assistage.com), which tests, recommends and sells technology that aims to support independent living for older people.

The products Assistage sells are tested by the parents of the company's bosses, Steve Purdham and Trevor Brocklebank. In March, after waking one morning, Mr Purdham's mother, 83-year-old Iris Purdham, found that she couldn't move. Doctors would later identify three compression fractures at the base of her spine.

Her son realised she needed help when he received a text message at 9am saying that her mother, who was testing 3rings, had yet to switch on the kettle that day.

Talking to *The Times*, Mr Purdham said: "Most technology will work, but it won't necessarily work in the hands of my mum. It's about making sure things work in the environment they're supposed to".

His mother is also testing a system that sends a reminder to take medication and a thermometer that flashes blue when the house is too cold.

3rings is available on a 12-month (£183) or 24-month (£288) subscription from www.3rings.co.uk. We'll aim to test it ourselves soon.

Facebook 'tracks your web browsing' even if you don't have an account

Facebook has been accused of breaking European law by tracking the web browsing of anyone who visits the site, regardless of whether they actually have an account with the social network.

The claim, which Facebook strongly denied, was made in late March in a report commissioned by the Belgian data-protection agency, following research at two universities in the country.

It also said Facebook continues to track people even if they opt out of being tracked in the site's privacy settings.

Researchers said Facebook places a cookie on your computer, phone or tablet when you visit any of its pages, even if you don't have an account.

Once that's done, Facebook knows when you visit a third-party web page that contains one of its plug-ins, such as a 'Like' or 'Share' button, even if you don't click that button. These buttons appear on over 13 million websites, including some run by the Government and the NHS.

The cookie, called 'datr', allows Facebook to follow your activity for two years. Like many sites, Facebook uses this information to target adverts to you.

If the claims are true, Facebook would be breaching EU privacy laws, which state that users must give consent to allow cookies when first visiting a website.

However, Facebook said that the report contains "factual inaccuracies".

A spokesperson said: "The authors have never contacted us, nor sought to clarify any assumptions upon which their report is based. Neither did they invite our comment on the report before making it public".

IN BRIEF

AMAZON FIRE TV STICK NOW ON SALE

Amazon is now selling its Fire TV Stick dongle in the UK (www.snipca.com/16005), following its US launch last year. At £35, it's £5 dearer than its direct rival, the Google Chromecast. By plugging the Fire TV Stick into an HDMI slot on your TV, you'll be able to watch, via Wi-Fi, channels and services including Netflix, BBC iPlayer, Sky News, Demand 5, Spotify and Amazon's Prime Instant Video. We will review the Fire TV Stick soon.

MAKE FREE PHONE CALLS IN WHATSAPP

WhatsApp has updated its Android app to let you make free phone calls on your mobile phone, giving you an alternative to Skype. Previously the app only let you send messages. WhatsApp's co-founder Brian Acton said that the feature will be added to its iOS app soon. Download the Android app for free from the Google Play Store: www.snipca.com/16020. We'll show you how to use it in our next issue, out Wed 29 April.

Tomorrow's world

Advances in robotics are increasingly being used to help people who suffer from impaired movement. Scientists at the University of Hertfordshire have spent the past three years developing a robotic glove to assist the rehabilitation of stroke patients. By pairing the glove with a PC game, users can regain some mobility in their hands. Watch it in action on BBC Click's YouTube channel: www.snipca.com/15897.

IN BRIEF

ANDROID DEVICES TO GET OFFICE

Forthcoming Android devices made by Dell and Samsung will come with Office tools after the companies agreed deals with Microsoft. Selected phones and tablets made by the companies will contain Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, OneDrive and Skype. However, you'll need to pay for Office 365 subscriptions to use all the editing features in each tool. This costs £7.99 a month or £79.99 a year (www.snipca.com/15957).

BT OFFERS NEW MOBILE PHONE DEALS

BT has launched its first new mobile phone deals in over a decade. It is offering three 4G subscriptions, with the cheapest priced just £5 a month for its broadband customers (£10 for those without BT broadband). They are all SIM-only deals, and all offer unlimited texts. Visit BT's website for more information: www.snipca.com/15970.

Want a free iPad Air and laptop? Simple – just become an MP

Controversial plans to give every MP a free iPad Air 2 after the General Election on 7 May have been branded "a mistake".

MPs will also receive a free laptop in a scheme that will cost £200,000 annually during the five-year parliament.

Since 2012, following a proposal by the House of Commons Commission, 209 MPs have been given taxpayer-funded iPads in order to read work on documents and read committee papers wherever they are.

But some MPs have been caught misusing them. Last year Nigel Mills, the Conservative MP for Amber Valley, was photographed playing the game Candy Crush on his iPad when he was taking part in a committee hearing on pension reforms (see the evidence at www.snipca.com/15934).

Shadow Cabinet Office minister Chi Onwurah, Labour MP for Newcastle upon Tyne Central, referred to Mills' behaviour when criticising the decision to hand out free iPads: "As we saw with Nigel Mills and Candy Crush, MPs will be using the games, and the iTunes and other features on the iPad".

Talking to IT website ComputerworldUK, Onwurah slated the decision to lock MPs into the Apple's iOS operating system at a time when the "digital community is pushing open source, open standards".

She added that it was wrong that MPs would be using a device that many of her constituents could not afford. Prices for the iPad Air 2 start from £399 on Apple's website (www.snipca.com/15940).

But Liberal Democrat John Thurso, the Commission's chairman, claimed that sticking with Apple will actually save money. He said that the iPads are "linked to a programme to reduce hard-copy printing in favour of online publication that is already delivering savings in excess of £3 million per year".

• Should MPs get a free iPad? Vote now at www.computeractive.co.uk

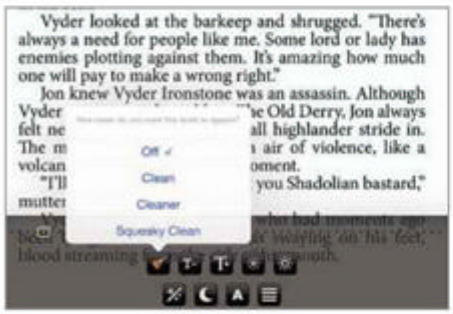
What the flip! Christian couple removes ebooks from app that censors swear words

A Christian couple from Idaho have stopped selling ebooks through their app Clean Reader (www.cleanreaderapp.com), which censors swear words, following complaints from authors.

Jared and Kirsten Maughan built the free app, available for Android and iOS, after their teenage daughter objected to swear words in a book she was reading at school.

The app suggests alternatives to swear words, religious and sexual terms, and certain body parts. For example, the f-word becomes 'freak', 'penis' becomes 'groin', 'vagina' becomes 'bottom', 'sexy' becomes 'lovely' and 'Jesus Christ' becomes 'gee'.

It has three settings: 'Clean', 'Cleaner' and 'Squeaky Clean'. The last of these extends censorship to include "some hurtful racial terms".



But following a backlash from authors, the couple said that the app will no longer sell ebooks because "many authors do not want their books being sold in connection with Clean Reader".

Chocolat author Joanne Harris helped draw attention to the app by condemning it in a blog post titled "Why I'm Saying 'F*** you' to Clean Reader" (www.snipca.com/15979). Harris wrote: "Words, if used correctly, can achieve almost anything. To tamper with what is written – however much we may dislike certain words and phrases – is to embrace censorship".

She subsequently said she was "delighted" that the app had stopped selling "vandalised" books.

Should Clean Reader be allowed to censor books? Please let us know at letters@computeractive.co.uk

Question of the Fortnight

When will robots take over from humans?

Threats posed by artificial intelligence are no longer just science fiction, leading technology figures have warned

For decades the threats posed by robots have been the stuff of science-fiction nightmares. Film-makers, philosophers and authors have depicted dystopian futures in which humans are enslaved by their mechanised masters, or rendered obsolete as jobs become automated.

That danger suddenly feels more real than ever as a growing number of tech experts warn that – if left unchecked – the growth of artificial intelligence (AI) could represent a serious threat to humanity. The latest prophet of doom is Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, who in March revealed his unease about the rise of AI. Talking to the *Australian Financial Review*, Wozniak said that "computers are going to take over from humans, no question".

He fears that eventually computers will "think faster than us and they'll get rid of the slow humans to run companies more efficiently".

> "Eventually human extinction will probably occur, and technology will likely play a part in this"

Wozniak hasn't always thought like this. He used to dismiss the claims of people like Ray Kurzweil, the hugely influential computer scientist and a director of engineering at Google, who predict a 'singularity' moment at which point AI will exceed human intellectual capacity, and become impossible to control.

Kurzweil has predicted this will occur in 2045, while others think it could arrive much earlier. Elon Musk, co-founder of PayPal and space-transport company SpaceX, has warned that "something seriously dangerous" could happen before 2020.

It's the rapid progress of AI that has made Wozniak more pessimistic about the future. His comments came a couple of months after hundreds of leading scientists, entrepreneurs and technologists, including Stephen Hawking, signed an open letter warning about the dangers of AI. The letter (www.snipca.com/15906), drafted by the Future of Life Institute – an organisation working to "mitigate existential risks facing humanity" – says that while AI could eradicate poverty and disease, there are also "potential pitfalls". AI systems "must do what we want them to do".

Elon Musk also signed the letter. Few people have been as vocal in highlighting the dangers of AI. He has described the development of thinking robots as "summoning the demon", and says they represent mankind's "biggest existential threat". He has called for an international regulatory body to oversee the development of AI so "we don't do something very foolish".

Step forward Google. In 2014, it created an ethics board to monitor its work in artificial intelligence, following the purchase of several robotics companies. These include DeepMind, a British company that makes software to help computers think like humans. It was co-founded by Shane Legg, who is just as resigned as Wozniak and Musk to the nature of humanity's downfall: "Eventually, I think human extinction will probably occur, and technology will likely play a part in this".

Of course, the question of when robots will take over is a loaded one. It removes all doubt, and assumes they will. Other technology pioneers are less gloomy. Google chairman Eric Schmidt says that fears over AI are "misguided", and sees a future in which the human race can only gain from advances in robotics and computing.

But then he would say that, wouldn't he? After all, is there another company that stands to benefit as much as Google does from a robotic future? At the moment Schmidt appears to be in a minority, so we can only hope the apocalyptic warnings of his peers will prompt him to take the threat more seriously.

THE FACTS

- Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak recently said he was worried about technology that could mimic human consciousness
- In January, Stephen Hawking was one of hundreds of technologists and scientists who signed an open letter asking for controls on artificial intelligence
- Google has created an ethics board to oversee its development of artificial intelligence

Letters

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www.twitter.com/computeractive

100Mbps? Not in my lifetime

Two news stories in Issue 446 caught my eye – Google's desire to help people live to 500, and the Government's proposal to deliver 100Mbps broadband to every home in the UK. Am I the only person to think the former is more likely than the latter?

Warren Archibald

Windows 8 is best version ever

Like many of your readers I'm mystified by the continued negative feedback that Windows 8 gets. I've been using Windows forever and 8.1 is by far the best of the crop. I'm using it loaded on a Vaio laptop with an SSD, which means that from switching on to being available for use takes less than 30 seconds. Because I'm a fan of the traditional Start menu, from the early days of Windows 8 I've been using the program Start8 (www.stardock.com/products/start8), which provides me with my familiar friendly Start screen and menu. I've also learnt to use the Charms bar, but I normally stay with what I'm used to. Obviously, I'll be upgrading to Windows 10 as soon as it becomes available in the summer. We OAPs are still intent on staying ahead of the youngsters!

Nick Jones

Fast broadband should be available everywhere

George Parks seems to be a spokesman for the Smug Urban Dweller Society (Letters, 445). Presumably, he also feels that those who live in the countryside should not have the benefit of telephone, gas, electricity and fresh water.

As a countryside dweller I find that the Government, public services and private companies increasingly require me to use broadband to get anything, often providing no alternative means to get things done. It is high time that reasonable broadband speeds were made compulsory everywhere, and before urban-dwellers get multi-megabyte services. Whether Mr Parks likes it or not, broadband is already, and should be treated as, a utility service.

Maurice Warwick

XP's 'death' isn't a Shakespearean tragedy

Harry Powell can quote *Monty Python* all he likes (Letters, Issue 446), but he's neither funny nor accurate in saying that Windows XP is dead. If it has shuffled off this mortal coil (if Mr Powell can quote Python, I should be allowed to paraphrase Shakespeare), then can someone please explain how it is that I use it every day. Perhaps XP has returned, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, to haunt my PC?

XP still works smoothly and safely on my PC. I also have a Windows 8 laptop, but it's a pain to use. My XP machine is the first one I switch on every day.

I still go online using it, and have yet to encounter the malware that Microsoft told us would be everywhere. Indeed, I would say that the supposed demise of XP is much ado about nothing!

Arthur Evans

I found love online (no Tinder required)

I share Stuart Andrews' misgivings about dating apps (The Final Straw, Issue 446). I had never heard of Tinder before, but it sounds truly horrid. I don't want to sound like a prude, but has the quest for love really been reduced to flicking through photos on a phone? What happened to writing love letters? I know you can be rude on a phone, but can you actually be wooed (with thanks to *Carry On Matron*)?

However, I do want to challenge the prejudice that the older generation may hold about dating online. There have been lots of scare stories about scams in which lonely, vulnerable people (both male and female) have been conned by charming fraudsters, who pose as potential partners. But as long as you don't abandon all sense when you date online, you should be safe.

I certainly was. I felt very lonely when my first husband died in 2004, but I had no desire to meet someone new, let alone do so over the internet. But a few years later, with some help from my daughter (who had met her husband online), I gave it a go on eHarmony (www.eharmony.co.uk). Yes, there are some time-wasters online, full of swanky talk, but I found it easy to spot the genuine people from the chancers (or maybe I'm just naturally sceptical!). After a few months I started

No, PC World, you can't eat a Raspberry Pi

I need to tell you of a recent experience I had at PC World in Manchester's Arndale Centre. I am looking to buy a Raspberry Pi and, knowing that PC World have them in stock online, I visited their shop hoping to examine one. I asked the salesman if he had a Raspberry Pi. He looked at me and smiled in a quizzical way, as if I was asking for something sweet to eat. I sensed that he had no idea what I was talking about. He then called another member of the staff who

also seemed to think that I had lost my marbles. I am 69 and had to explain to these two twentysomethings what a Raspberry Pi was, and I am not sure that I convinced them.

How disappointing it was from my perspective to find that the younger generation are not always as technically savvy as we are led to believe.

Roger Wedlake

chatting to a lovely man roughly the same age as me. Those chats turned into a few dates. Those dates turned into a 'fine romance'. And that romance finally turned into a wedding. Despite using new technology, it all seemed very quaint and old-fashioned. It proves you don't have to be a sex-mad youngster to find love online.

Dorothy O'Connor

More places should ban 'selfish' sticks

I applaud the National Gallery for banning so-called selfie sticks (News, Issue 446). A recent trip there was ruined by some idiots who used these sticks so carelessly it almost seemed like they were jousting. I urge all galleries to follow suit, or some priceless artworks will be damaged. I can easily imagine a sculpture losing a head by a recklessly swung selfie stick. Also, can I propose a name change? Surely they should be called selfish sticks?

Terence Macpherson

Apple's 'gimmicky tests' are no substiture for a doctor

Apple's ResearchKit seems like a waste of time to me ('What's All the Fuss About?', Issue 446). As a retired GP, I doubt any serious data will result from what seem like gimmicky tests. The only way you can truly ascertain the health of a patient is seeing them in the flesh. If I'm unfortunate enough ever to develop Parkinson's, my first thought will be to visit the doctor, not to download a flipping app! And as for saying 'Aaaaah' into an iPhone, I'm much more likely to say 'Arggghhhh!' when I see how expensive they are.

Christopher Ball

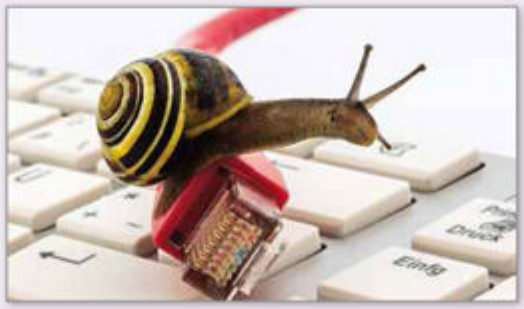
Greenhouse heater killed my Wi-Fi

I had a similar problem to Stuart Andrews (The Final Straw, Issue 445) when my Wi-Fi stopped working. After tearing out what little hair I had left and reverting to an old router, I finally took stock of things I'd recently done in my house and I realised I'd switched on a greenhouse tube heater. Switching it off immediately fixed my Wi-Fi. I launched a Wi-Fi-detector app on my tablet and watched it while I switched the heater on and off, and noticed all the Wi-Fi spots disappear. Long live Ethernet cables!

Roy Houghton

STAR LETTER

Slow broadband, £13k watches and free iPads for MPs: April Fool's?



I thoroughly enjoyed your little quiz in Issue 446 on tech hoaxes. You managed to fool me – I thought the Twitter marriage service was real. It's the sort of ridiculous thing that seems to happen online these days.

I'd like to pose a similar (if a little late) April Fool's quiz. Can you guess which of these three crazy stories are fake? First of all, there's the great broadband scandal of 2015. Despite living in busy urban areas, there are lots of people in the UK (me included) who can only get a broadband speed of around 2Mbps (on a good day). This is the same country whose chancellor recently announced plans to deliver 100Mbps to every home. Could such a preposterous situation possibly be true?

Secondly, Apple is now selling a fancy watch for over £13,000, much more than many people in the UK (me included) have to live on a year. It's such a lot of money for a watch that you may think this story couldn't possibly be true. My own watch cost a mere £20 from Argos. Are Apple really selling one for the cost of a VW Polo?

And third, all 650 MPs will soon receive free iPads so they will find it easier to fiddle their expenses and write rubbish on Twitter. They are getting this freebie despite being paid more than twice the average UK wage, and at a time when many of their constituents (me included) are having their benefits slashed. Surely this can't be true?

So, can you guess which ones are fake? As indicated by my sarcastic tone, none of them are false. They are all true, and all demonstrate how bonkers the world is getting. Thank god for *Computeractive* for keeping me sane!

Brian Dutton

The Star Letter writer wins a *Computeractive* mug!

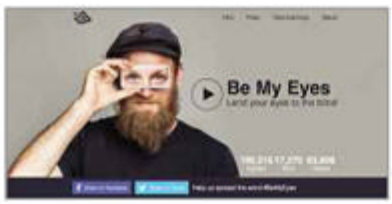
It's hard not to abuse phone scammers

Mr Ingrey (Letters, Issue 445) talks rather disparagingly about "the odd nuisance call", saying the majority of calls are from people we want to hear from. I wish. I'm writing this at Wednesday lunchtime, and since Monday morning have received seven nuisance calls (the earliest at 6.45am when I was still asleep) and four from people I know. I try hard not to abuse those making these calls, but can understand why some people do. Perhaps Mr Ingrey should count himself lucky if he really only does receive "the odd" such call.

Brian Hudson

Online volunteers help to lead the blind

Your reader Sylvia Nicholls, who asked about the best software to help her blind friend ('What Should I Buy?', Issue 445, page 24), might find a great new service called BeMyEyes.org (http://bemyeyes.org) of use. Blind iPhone users can download a simple app that lets them connect via video to sighted users, who can then describe what they see, read text or help them with whatever question they might have.



At the moment there are 10 sighted helpers for every blind person, so I'm sure Sylvia's friend could get assistance really quickly.

Han Dunsterville

Consumeractive

I don't get promised broadband speed – can I get a refund?

Q **I've been with Virgin Media for over two years and was initially told I could get 20Mbps. But I have never achieved more than 9Mbps. I recently upgraded to 50Mbps, but still can't get above 9Mbps. Virgin has said it's because of ongoing installation work, but is still charging me for the upgraded speed. Can I get a refund?**

Riyaz Mamdani

A Riyaz is entitled to a refund for the period since he upgraded to 50Mbps, but he'll have to forget about getting any money back for the time before. Filing a complaint going back even a year is unlikely to be successful because if you let a situation rumble on for that long without taking action, then legally you are deemed to have accepted it. The onus is always on the customer to take action as soon as possible.

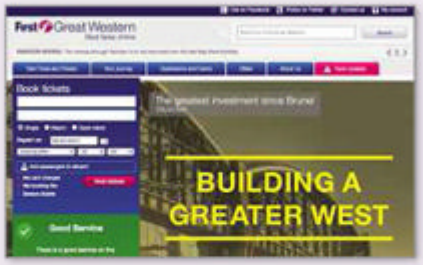
To get a refund for the period since he upgraded to 50Mbps, Riyaz needs to write to Virgin explaining that it has sold him a service it can't currently fulfil and is therefore in breach of contract. He should request a refund for the extra money he's now paying for the 50Mbps service.

CASE CLOSED

Are First Great Western's terms and conditions unfair?

Q **I paid £43 online for a train ticket and was about to print it using First Great Western's app, but I couldn't get the app to open. Instead, I printed proof that I'd paid for the ticket, and showed this to the station staff on the day of my journey. But they told me they couldn't accept it because the terms and conditions showed that printing the ticket was my responsibility. I had to pay £54 for another ticket. Is this fair?**

Judith Rowbotham



A It doesn't seem fair to us because everyone suffers technical problems from time to time, and we'd have hoped First Great Western (FGW) would've had contingency plans to help passengers in these situations. But although FGW clearly states that printable tickets are non-refundable, we think Judith should try to get her money back using the legal protection under the Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations (UTCCRs), which states that companies can't set unfair conditions.

First, Judith should write to FGW stating why she believes the terms are unfair, using this letter template from Which?: www.snipca.com/15801. The company may give her a refund, but if not she could take her complaint to the small claims court, because only a court can decide what's fair and what's not.

If she doesn't want to do this, she could report FGW to her local Trading Standards department. The best way to do this is through the Advice Guide website (www.adviceguide.org.uk), run by Citizen's Advice, which will pass her complaint on to the relevant office. Judith can also file a complaint with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), though she should read its guidelines first: www.snipca.com/15802. She should then file her claim online at Gov.uk: www.snipca.com/15812.

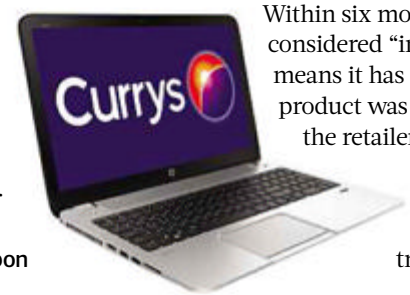
We've also contacted FGW for more information so we'll update you with its response in a later issue.

CASE ONGOING

Do I have to put up with repeated repairs?

Q **I bought an HP Envy Laptop from Currys on the 29 December for £899. After three months the motherboard developed a fault. Currys only offered to send it for repair. It came back with the same fault, so it's been sent for another repair. Because it's within six months of purchase, can I demand a refund or replacement instead?**

Chris Newbon



A No, Chris can't demand a refund or replacement after one repair within the first six months. But he's right to think that six months is a legally important period of time. Within six months, any fault is considered "inherent", which means it has existed since the product was made. The onus is on the retailer or manufacturer to prove this isn't the case. They are legally allowed to try to repair or refund the product, even more than once. You can only demand a replacement or a refund if a repair isn't feasible.

We feel that forcing people to put up with repeated repairs is wrong, so it's good to know that the new Consumer Rights Bill, due to become law this year, will entitle customers to an automatic replacement after only one failed repair. We've contacted Currys to ask them to make sure it speeds up the repair, and takes extra care to properly fix the fault.

CASE ONGOING

We stand up for your legal rights

Contact us so we can investigate your case

Email: consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk
Write: Consumeractive, Computeractive, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD
Please include both your phone number and address.
Unfortunately, we can't reply to all your letters.

Can you help us get a faulty PC fixed?

Q My mother-in-law bought a Lenovo IdeaCentre B540 computer in August 2013 from PC World. It cost £749.99 and hasn't been used much. It stopped working in January 2015, but PC World said it's out of warranty so we'd have to pay for any inspection and repair. We think PC World should have done this without charging us because we believe the PC is 'not fit for purpose'. Can you help?

Kenni Rollins

A Yes we can, but PC World is legally correct to refuse to repair it for free. This is because the PC was brought more than six months ago. After six months, as we explain in Chris Newbon's case (see opposite page), the onus is on the customer to prove a fault is inherent, and not the result of accidental damage or wear and tear. Paying for an independent inspection is usually the only way to do this.

However, companies often respond to our plea for a goodwill gesture, so we'll ask Lenovo and PC World to inspect the PC for free. If they won't, Kenni could consider paying them to do so, but it would be cheaper to get the PC examined by a reputable local PC repair shop. If this shows there's an inherent fault, PC World must repair the computer free of charge, and pay for the cost of the inspection.

CASE ONGOING

CASE UPDATE

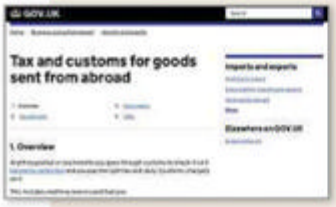
South Korean Amazon Marketplace seller refunds HMRC charges

We've got some good news to report on Hillary Duffy's complaint against HMRC, which appeared in Issue 446. She was annoyed HMRC was charging her £11.38 (20 per cent VAT plus a handling fee) for a package of plastic food containers that had been sent from South Korea by a company called Shopforyou.

Hillary wanted to dispute the fee because she didn't realise Shopforyou was based in South Korea. Under HMRC rules, you can only avoid paying VAT on goods being sent from outside the EU if they cost less than £36 and are labelled as gifts. Shopforyou did actually label the goods as a gift, but for whatever reason HMRC still added VAT.

Hillary almost definitely wouldn't have been able to persuade HMRC to drop the fee, but she did manage to get a refund for £11.38 from Shopforyou after leaving scathing feedback on the company's Amazon Marketplace account. Her main complaint was that the company didn't make it clear it was based in South Korea. After Hillary received the refund, she removed the negative feedback as a goodwill gesture.

Her success shows the power of feedback in this internet age, but also serves as a reminder to always double-check the location and legitimacy of sellers on Amazon and eBay. Visit HMRC's website to see what fees you may be charged on imported goods: www.snipca.com/15803.



THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Solid-state drive manufacturers

Corsair
Contact: https://corsair.secure.force.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/Corsair

Crucial
0800 013 0330
Contact: www.snipca.com/15732
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CrucialMemory
Twitter: @CrucialMemory

Kingston
01932 738888
Email: customerservice@kingston.eu
Facebook: www.snipca.com/15733

OCZ
01235 824900
Contact form: www.snipca.com/15809
Twitter: @OCZStorage

Samsung
0330 726 7864
Contact: www.snipca.com/15752
Facebook: www.facebook.com/SamsungUK

SanDisk
0203 3183 965
Facebook: www.facebook.com/SanDiskUK
Live chat: www.snipca.com/15808

Seagate
0800 4732 4283
Contact form: http://support2.seagate.com
Facebook: www.snipca.com/15745

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Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

‘Activate your BT ID’ scam emails

What happened?

We recently received a phishing email purporting to be from BT that was one of the most convincing scams we’ve seen this year. It came from ebilling@bt.com and bypassed our spam filter using the subject line ‘Activate your BT ID to see your account online’.

Headlined ‘Important: You need to verify your BT ID’, the email tries to trick you into clicking a link to confirm your account. The email says you should do this so you can “go online to see your bills, products and extras, including the BT SmartTalk and BT Sport Apps”.

To the unsuspecting eye it looks genuine. There are no spelling mistakes or grammatical errors, and it asks you to click www.bt.com/help if you have any questions.

We could tell it was a spam simply by hovering our cursor over any of the links in the email. This shows you the web address you’ll be sent to if you were to click the link. In our case, that was the dubious-sounding ‘http://susdungo.lv/engine/.all/’ (see screenshot right) – the suffix ‘.lv’ means the website is based in Latvia.

Bear in mind, when the email arrived in our inbox it contained BT logos and other professional-looking images where the red crosses are in our screenshot. We took this screenshot a day after, by which time the images had disappeared, making it look far less genuine.

What should you do?

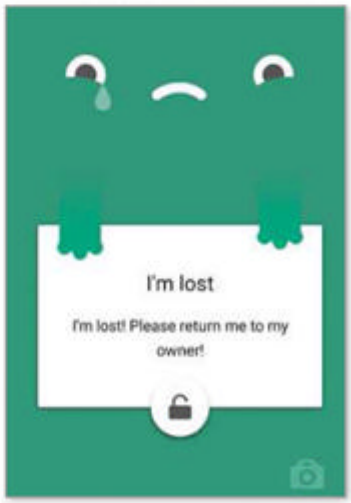
If you receive this email, forward it to BT at phishing@bt.com, then delete it. BT has some great advice on its website

(www.snipca.com/15859) on how to spot phishing scams. If you do accidentally click one of the links in the email, your browser should still protect you. The most recent versions of Firefox, Chrome and Internet Explorer all warned us that the site was malicious.

New tools

Kaspersky Phound for Android
www.snipca.com/15851

Two thoughts race through your mind when you lose your phone or tablet. First, where is it? And second, is anyone using it? Kaspersky’s free Phound app for Android (there’s no iOS version planned) answers both those questions.



To use it, you need to sign up to My Kaspersky (https://center.kaspersky.com), and then log into it on your computer (assuming you’ve lost your device). If you think you’ve simply lost it around the house, trigger the Alarm feature and you’ll soon hear where it’s hiding. But if your device has been stolen, you can locate it using GPS, then lock it to abruptly end the thief’s fun. You can also make it display a message asking to be returned, complete with a tearful sad face (see screenshot).

It’s another great product from Kaspersky, winner of our past *four* antivirus tests (see reader offer on page 68), though we don’t like the ‘ph’ in the name. What’s wrong with the humble ‘f’?

ScamWatch

READERS WARN READERS

Fake Facebook friend request

I got an email, purporting to be from Facebook, saying my friend Paul had indicated that I’m his friend. It asked me to accept his request to be a friend, and there were buttons for ‘Cancel’ and ‘Accept’. Paul is an *actual* friend, but not a Facebook friend, so I knew it was a scam. Worryingly, the email senders knew my name. I clicked ‘Cancel’ and was directed to a website for “login.flipora.com”, which triggered a WOT (Web of Trust) warning. I emailed Paul, and he’d had a similar email from a mutual friend. We chose not to go further into the website.

Steve Hill

Warn your fellow readers about scams at letters@computeractive.co.uk

WI-FI

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devolo CURES WEAK WI-FI

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* Required: broadband Internet connection, router and active power sockets within one property.

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ADWARE REMOVER

AdwCleaner 4.200

www.snipca.com/16022
What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8/8.1

Our favourite tool for getting rid of unwanted toolbars, browser hijackers and other adware is now even better. The new version of AdwCleaner doesn't add loads of fancy functions; instead it's been updated to work faster and remove more junk.

We wouldn't normally devote this page to a program that's only had performance updates. But we're making an exception for AdwCleaner because it's one of the most useful tools on our PC and we wanted to show you, click by click, how to use it.

As we mentioned in our Cover Feature in Issue 446 ('Remove Hidden Malware'), AdwCleaner scans your PC's files, processes and browsers for evidence of adware and malware, including toolbars and other PUPs (potentially unwanted programs). It then lists the malicious files and lets you delete them all with one click.

This new version is faster than its predecessor, especially in the scanning stage, and uses more powerful technology to kill infected processes. It can now detect infected preferences in Chrome, making it more effective against browser hijackers such as the horrendous Binkiland (www.snipca.com/16025).

AdwCleaner is a portable tool, so you don't have to install it, and you can copy its program file ('adwcleaner_4.200.exe') to a USB stick for running on any PC. To run it, click the EXE file, click Yes, and then click 'I agree' to open the program window.

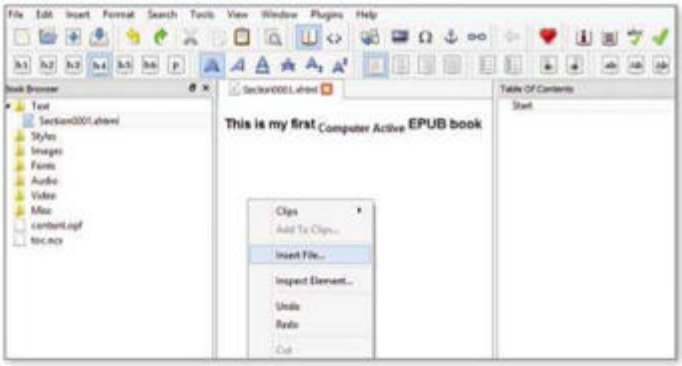
The downside of portable software is that it isn't updated automatically, so you'll have to check for new versions. Only use the link above to download AdwCleaner; don't click any pop-ups claiming to contain an update. Scammers have used this trick to sneak a fake version of AdwCleaner on to PCs.

1 Click the Scan button to update AdwCleaner's database (this takes about two seconds, compared with up to half a minute in the previous version) and begin scanning your PC.

2 When the scan is finished, click the tabs, such as Registry and Internet Explorer, to see the infected files AdwCleaner found there. Untick anything you're sure is a false positive.

3 To see all the infected files in one list, click Tools, then 'Quarantine manager'. Also, click Logfile to open the list in Notepad and save it for your records.

4 Click Cleaning to remove all the files discovered by AdwCleaner, then restart your PC to complete the process. Run AdwCleaner again to make sure everything's been removed.



EBOOK EDITOR

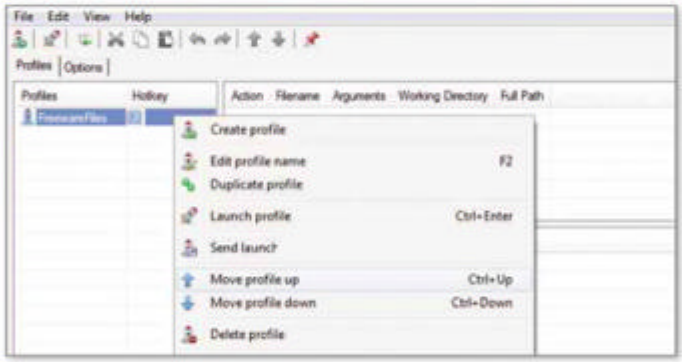
Sigil

www.snipca.com/16026

What you need: Windows Vista, 7 or 8/8.1

Create your own illustrated EPUB ebook using this new open-source program. Unlike most ebook-writing services, such as Lulu (https://www.lulu.com), Sigil uses a WYSIWYG ('what you see is what you get') editor so you don't have to write or format any code. It's easy to style your text and chapter headings, create a clickable table of contents and insert photos and illustrations, including your book's cover.

To install Sigil, go to the GitHub link above and click 'Sigil-0.8.5-Windows-Setup.exe' (or the link below it, if your PC is 64bit), then run the installer. There are no extras in the setup wizard, but it will install Microsoft C++ (which is safe) if it's not already on your PC. Read more about Sigil on its developer's site: http://sigil-ebook.com.



SYSTEM TOOL

Splat

www.snipca.com/16037

What you need: Windows 7 or 8/8.1

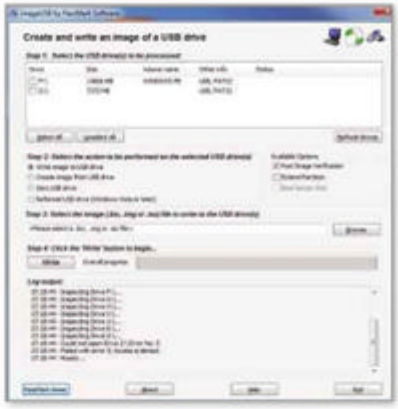
Splat (short for 'Simple Program Launching and Termination') lets you open and close groups of programs and websites at once, using keyboard shortcuts. For example, if you're working on a family tree project, create a Splat shortcut to open your genealogy program, Excel and your research bookmarks in Chrome, all with one click. Or if you're about to run a memory-intensive program such as your antivirus or video editor, you could use a Splat shortcut to free up memory first by closing all unnecessary processes. To download the portable program, click the little orange 'Splat.zip' link halfway down the page.

USB TOOL

ImageUSB

www.snipca.com/16024

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8/8.1



The humble USB stick may seem old-fashioned compared with SSDs, virtual machines and the like, but it's as useful as ever - you can even use one to install Windows 10. This new program lets you copy the contents of one USB stick or drive to another (or several, provided you have enough USB ports), and makes it easy to write a disk image to USB. To get the portable program, scroll down the page and click the grey 'ImageUSB Free download' button, then extract the ZIP and run the program file ('imageUSB.exe').

WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software to use

Can I transfer photos to my iPad without iTunes?

Q **Can you suggest an alternative to the awful iTunes 12? All I want to do is drag photos and videos from my PC on to my iPad to show to friends, but iTunes won't let me. It's the most unhelpful program. What should I use instead?**

Tony Pritchard

A The best program is also an app: Photo Transfer App (www.phototransferapp.com). For £2.49 it gives you complete control over sending and receiving photos and videos between all your devices via Wi-Fi. Once you've paid for the iOS version (www.snipca.com/16033) you're then free to install it on Android (www.snipca.com/16038) and your PC, as many times as you want.

It's worth mentioning (because Apple doesn't exactly publicise it) that you can plug your iPad into your PC, just as if it were an external hard drive. All you need is your iPad's USB cable. Plug the other end into your PC and you'll see a message on your iPad: 'Trust This Computer?'. Tap Trust, and your iPad will appear as a device in Windows (File) Explorer. Navigate to the DCIM folder and drag or copy files in and out of it. This is a more rough-and-ready solution than Photo Transfer App, but it's ideal for occasional transfers.

Do you need our advice on what software to use? Just email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

Reviews

New products tested by our experts

TABLET | **£320** from www.snipca.com/15973

Dell Venue 8 7840

An Android tablet that lets you measure things with its camera

Dell may be best known for its PCs and laptops, but the company is also one of the oldest manufacturers of Android tablets. None of them, it has to be said, have been particularly good. At first glance, the Venue 8 7840 (also known as the Venue 8 7000) seems to buck this trend. It's incredibly thin, has a super-high-resolution screen and has a camera that can measure objects and distances. On closer inspection, however, the 7840 isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Size and weight

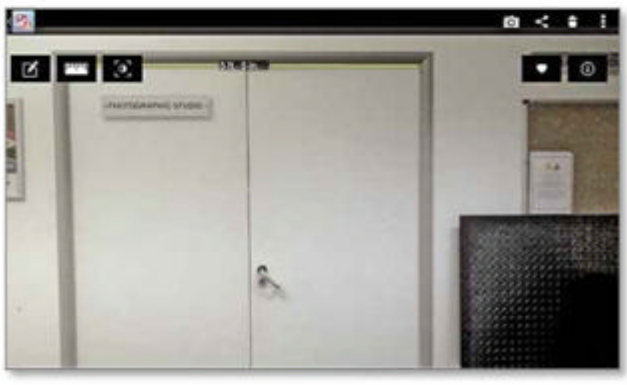
With a thickness of just 6mm, the 7840 is one of the thinnest tablets we've tested. You might expect it to be quite flimsy, but its metal casing feels incredibly robust. It's also impressively lightweight at just 306g. The borders around three sides of its screen are incredibly narrow, and with so little purchase area for your fingers it's not always easy to hold. The thin borders also means it's far too easy to inadvertently trigger an onscreen control or cover up the rear camera when trying to take a photo.

The bottom border (in portrait mode) is wider, but this houses the front-facing camera and speaker, so you have to be careful not to cover these with your fingers when having a video chat. The placement of the front-facing camera near the edge, rather than closer to the middle as on most tablets, seems odd at first but it does make it a little easier to get a good view of your face in video chats while still maintaining eye contact with the other caller.

Cameras

The most striking feature of the 7840 is its rear-facing camera. This has three lenses which, using technology developed by Intel, can measure objects such as the dimensions of a picture frame or the width of a hallway. You use Dell's camera app to take a photo, then its photo app to indicate what you want to measure by marking the object with your finger.

That's the theory. In practice, the measurements were often off by around two inches or so – in some cases by as much as a whole foot. Despite the photo app's insistence that the measurements would be more accurate the more photos we took, this yawning margin of error persisted throughout our efforts, making this potentially useful measuring feature no more than a gimmick. It might help settle a pub argument or two, but it'll be of little use when planning some weekend DIY. To be fair to Intel and Dell, this is a difficult trick to pull off, given how even the clearest photos can suffer from subtle distortions in perspective and geometry, but they should have held back this technology and perfected it rather than releasing it in such a flawed and under-developed state.



In theory, you can measure the width of a door with the Venue's three-lens camera

Another problematic feature that uses the three-lens rear camera is the ability to change the focus of your photos after you've taken them, similar to the trick of the Lytro camera (see our review, Issue 404). However, much like other Android devices that have attempted to reproduce this focus-shifting ability (namely the HTC One M8 and the Samsung Galaxy S5 – see our reviews, Issues 421 and 423 respectively), the 7840's version of this feature is crude. Within a photo, certain parts of a building or a person, for example, will randomly appear out of focus.

The rear cameras aren't even good enough for standard photography. Photos are blighted by lots of noise and a blue-ish cast, even when shooting in broad daylight. It's no match for a decent

smartphone camera, making it a camera of last resort only.

Screen, responsiveness and performance

It's a shame this tablet's camera isn't up to scratch, because photos look gorgeous on the high-quality 8in screen. While contrast leaves a little to be desired, colour accuracy is excellent and the screen is so dazzlingly bright at its maximum setting, you may need sunglasses.

Due to the screen's very high resolution (2560x1440 pixels), text is razor sharp and images incredibly detailed. Disappointingly, the touchscreen often responded slowly to our swipes and prods, which was frustrating.

At least the performance of the quad-core Intel Atom Z3580 processor was up to scratch. It sped through our 3D graphics and app-loading benchmark tests. It only fell down in our web page-loading test, where it was slower than the very fastest tablets such as the iPad Air 2 and the Nexus 9 (see our reviews, Issues 437 and 438, respectively). But that means it's still faster than most Android tablets

> "Dell has neglected screen responsiveness and user-friendly design, resulting in a flawed tablet"

we've put through this test. We have no complaints about its battery life though. It lasted an impressive 14 and a half hours when playing videos continuously.

Operating system and speakers

The 7840 comes with Android 4.4 KitKat pre-installed, with a free upgrade to Android 5.0 Lollipop promised for late April. Thankfully, Dell has resisted the urge to tamper extensively with the standard Android interface. Aside from the inclusion of a few extra apps, including the ones necessary to use the camera's measurement features, the only major alteration is the addition of an equaliser.

Accessed from the notifications drawer,

the equaliser greatly improves the sound quality of the otherwise tinny built-in speakers, increasing the clarity of spoken dialogue in both videos and audio (in podcasts and online radio streams, for example). There's only so much the equaliser can do though, and it can't hide the speakers' lack of precision and bass sound. For the best audio quality, particularly for music, you'll need a high-quality pair of headphones or external speakers.

Conclusion

Despite its quality screen and long battery life, the Dell Venue 8 7840 is a pretty average tablet overall. By focusing on its slender construction and gimmicky camera features, Dell has neglected crucial aspects such as screen responsiveness and user-friendly design, resulting in a flawed and inconsistent tablet. At this price, we'd much rather have the Sony Xperia Z3 Tablet Compact or the iPad Mini 2 (see our reviews, Issues 440 and 416 respectively), which are far better mini tablets.

SPECIFICATIONS

8.4in 2560x1600-pixel touchscreen • 2.3GHz Intel Atom Z3580 quad-core processor • 2GB memory • 16GB storage • Android 4.4 KitKat • 306g • 216x124x6mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/15973

HOW WE TEST

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Every product that gets a four-star review is given the Great Pick award. We highly recommend these products, although they just fail to meet the high standard of our Buy It! winners.

PRICES

Our reviews contain a link to the best price we found online at the time of press.

VERDICT: A gimmicky camera and some bad design choices hobble what could've been an excellent tablet

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: Sony Xperia Z3 Tablet Compact £300 Smoother responsiveness and a waterproof design make this 8in Android tablet better value

SMARTPHONE | **£500 (without contract)** from www.snipca.com/15907

LG G Flex 2

The curved Android phone that can repair itself

In Issue 446 we reviewed Samsung's Galaxy Note Edge, an Android phone with a screen that curved over the phone's right-hand edge. LG's G Flex 2 has an even more pronounced curve – a concave design (see image right) that makes it stand out from the crowd. That's not the phone's only futuristic feature – its rear casing can repair itself thanks to its clever chemical composition.

LG claims the curved contours make the phone feel more comfortable when pressed up against your face while you make a call, and even when it's stored away in your pocket, pressed against your body. We aren't convinced by these claims – any increase in comfort levels is negligible. The curve is also supposed to make the large 5.5in screen easier to use with one hand, but it's just as unwieldy as screens on other phone of this size.

The curved screen's only plausible benefit is that it would be less likely to crack if dropped on the floor, given that

> "The futuristic curved screen is unwieldy and of little practical benefit"

most of the screen would avoid contact with the ground. We didn't risk putting our theory to the test, but we did have the opportunity to test the self-repairing rear casing when an over-excitable child put a gash in it using a set of house keys. A few minor scratches healed within a few hours and the faint scuff marks left behind could only be seen when held up to the light. A more serious gouge healed in a couple of days. Although this did leave visible scratch marks behind, the recovery was nonetheless very impressive.

The image quality of the screen is excellent. It's very bright with spot-on colour accuracy and great contrast, while text is razor sharp, thanks to its 1080p resolution. Responsiveness was somewhat disappointing though (which surprised us given the screen's other attributes), with the touchscreen sometimes struggling to keep up with our finger prods and swipes.

Unlike some older Samsung phones which claimed to have eight-core processors (even though only four of those eight cores could be used at any one time), the Snapdragon 810 processor here has true eight-core credentials and is one of the fastest mobile processors we've ever seen. The phone did get warm when running very demanding apps though, but it never became uncomfortable.

Battery life was nothing special. When connected to Vodafone's 3G network in central London and used for calls, taking photos, web browsing and GPS, the battery lasted 26 hours 15 minutes. When playing videos continuously, it only managed 11 hours 11 minutes. Call quality was generally very good though. While callers did tend to sound hushed and distant to our ears, we came across loud and clear to them with background noises successfully filtered out.

Although not flawless, the camera is better than those on many other Android phones of a similar price. Outdoor shots in bright daylight were sharp and detailed. The only flaw here were skies that were often oversaturated and looked unrealistic. Photos taken in low light were sufficiently illuminated with noise kept to a minimum, although the focus was a tad too soft.

The G Flex 2 is one of the first phones to come with Android 5.0 Lollipop, but LG has let itself down with some of the changes it has made to the interface. A large widget for tracking health data occupies one home screen and can't be removed, while a nagging dialogue box pops up to tell you the phone is using 3G/4G every time you wander out of Wi-Fi range. Lollipop's handy new 'do not disturb' features are now buried deep in the settings app, making them a real hassle to reach.

The G Flex 2 is a real mixed bag. The futuristic curved screen is of little practical benefit, while for every well implemented feature there's another half-baked one. We hope the best ones will make it to LG's other phones. For now though, even if you're willing to spend this much, you're better off waiting for rival Android phones from Samsung and HTC.

SPECIFICATIONS

5.5in 1920x1080-pixel touchscreen • 1.56GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 810 eight-core processor • Adreno 430 graphics chip • 2GB memory • 16GB storage • 4G • Micro SIM • Android 5.0 Lollipop • 152g • 149x75x9mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty

www.snipca.com/15908

VERDICT: A mixed bag of gimmicks and genuinely useful features make this phone only fair value

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPhone 6 Plus £619 A more expensive phablet, but with a superior camera and almost flawless responsiveness

CAMERA | **£249** from www.snipca.com/15875

Sony QX1

Upgrade your smartphone's camera with this odd add-on

The Sony QX1 is one of the oddest cameras we've ever seen. Sony calls it a 'lens-style' camera, because it lacks a screen and eyepiece. The idea is that you connect it wirelessly to your smartphone, then use your phone's screen to take and view photos. This means the QX1 is significantly smaller than your average camera, which lets you be more creative with your shots because you can place it in more unusual places and control it remotely.

Sony also markets the QX1 as an 'upgrade' for your smartphone's camera because you can clamp it to the back of your phone (you might also just hold it or mount it on a standard tripod). It uses the same 20.1-megapixel sensor and image processor as Sony's brilliant Alpha A5000 camera (see our review, Issue 428). This is pretty impressive, given the A5000 produces far superior image quality than any other smartphone. Much like with the A5000, you can use a variety of lenses with the QX1 (as long as they use Sony's E Mount fitting), which makes it more versatile than a standard smartphone camera. Bizarrely, Sony doesn't include a lens with the QX1. A basic zoom lens costs a whopping £259, which more than doubles the price.

> "It's great fun, with superb image quality, but far too expensive"

Every time you use the QX1 you have to pair it with your Android or iOS smartphone over Wi-Fi using the free PlayMemories app. If your Android phone supports NFC, then you can simply tap it against the QX1. iPhone owners will have to connect via the app, but it's a quick process either way – we connected it to our Samsung Galaxy S5 in around three seconds.

Once it's paired, you use the app to take and view photos as well as change settings. Photos are saved directly to the microSD card inside the camera and can also be automatically backed up to your smartphone. Advanced settings control shutter speed, aperture size, ISO and white balance. You also have the option of shooting in RAW format instead of JPEG.

Taking pictures when paired via Wi-Fi was very smooth in our tests, with only a slight delay between pressing the onscreen shutter button on our phone and the camera capturing an image. The live preview (showing what the camera is viewing) suffered from only negligible delay. If you aren't shooting remotely, you just use the physical shutter and zoom controls on the camera itself for quick results.

The QX1's battery survived a whole day of shooting, more than could be said for our phone's battery. While you can of course take photos with just the QX1, this is hardly ideal.

When used with Sony's basic zoom lens, image quality was unsurprisingly on a par with that of the A5000, and streets ahead of any smartphone. Colours were vibrant yet balanced, while autofocus was reliable and fast. The big SLR-style sensor kept noise to a minimum, so skin tones and other subtle textures were captured accurately, while shots in low light were respectable. Using an alternative lens with a wider aperture let us capture images in the sort of dark conditions that would defeat any smartphone or compact camera.

We had great fun shooting with the QX1, but it's just far too expensive. When bought with a basic zoom lens, it costs almost twice as much as an A5000 with the same lens. It might be worth your while if you already own a Sony CSC, and therefore already own a collection of Sony E Mount lenses, but most recent Sony CSCs have the same remote-shooting feature as the QX1, albeit in a bulkier package. All of this makes the QX1 something of a luxury, for wealthy photography enthusiasts only.

SPECIFICATIONS

20.1-megapixel sensor • Accepts microSD and Memory Stick Micro storage cards • 158g • 70x74x53mm (HxWxD) • Requires Android or iOS device • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/15874

VERDICT: Superb image quality and flexible shooting, but it's too expensive

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: Sony A5000 £259 Essentially the same camera in a bulkier design but at half the cost of the QX1 when bought with the same lens

LAPTOP | **£650** from www.snipca.com/15974

Asus ZenBook UX305

Long battery life and a thin, lightweight casing at a surprisingly reasonable price

The best ultra-portable laptops tend to be expensive – slender lightweight casings, large long-lasting batteries and power-efficient components don't come cheap. This makes the relatively low price and high quality of the Asus ZenBook UX305 all the more surprising.

The UX305 is remarkably thin with its metal casing only just thick enough to accommodate its three USB 3.0 ports. Despite how slender and leightweight (1.2kg) it is, its metal build is robust with only a little flexing in its base and lid. Its mauve design is attractive too, as is the circular pattern etched into the lid.

We were worried that such a thin casing would mean a less comfortable keyboard (thin casings tend to leave less room for the key mechanisms, resulting in less travel). But it still had enough, and combined with plenty of feedback, it made for fast, error-free typing. The keys aren't backlit for typing in low-lit conditions, but that's a minor quibble. The touchpad is large and accurate, even though some of the gestures, such as scrolling by swiping two fingers up or down, feel a little juddery and imprecise.

> "It has the battery life, build and screen quality normally found in a laptop twice the price"

There's no touchscreen, but we've never been fans of this feature on laptops. While the screen is a little grainy, it does have an anti-glare finish that keeps overhead light reflections to a minimum. Both contrast and colour accuracy are good, while the viewing angles are wide. Thanks to the generous 1920x1080-pixel resolution, text looks sharp, if a little on the small side. A small tweak of Windows' display settings helps to compensate for this.

The UX305 is completely silent because it uses one of Intel's new Core M processors, which doesn't need a cooling fan. Despite this, the underside of the laptop never became uncomfortably warm – even when we ran our most strenuous benchmark tests, designed to really stretch the processor. Its energy-efficient design helped the UX305 achieve an impressive 12 hours of battery life in our light-usage test – a significant achievement given the battery is smaller than those found in many rival laptops.

The downside is that the Core M processor is noticeably slower than fourth- or fifth-generation Intel Core i5 and i7 processors. While it's on a par when it comes to image editing, it's around 50 per cent slower when editing video, and about a third as fast when running multiple programs at the same time. It's more than fast enough for more mundane tasks though.

Starting up and waking from sleep are almost instantaneous, thanks to the 128GB SSD. You can't buy it with a bigger SSD though. And while it's possible to upgrade the SSD yourself, disassembling this laptop means dealing with lots of tiny, fiddly screws. Another thing to remember is that the SSD is an M.2 type, which cost more per gigabyte than a SATA model. If you have lots of files then you'll probably have to rely on external or online storage.

The Asus ZenBook UX305 is a remarkably good-value laptop with the battery life, build and screen quality normally found in a laptop twice the price. The only downside is the so-so performance. If you want an ultra-portable laptop that's powerful enough for use as your main computer, then the Asus ZenBook UX303LA is a better buy (see our review, Issue 442). Although thicker and a tad heavier, it's far faster with a comparable battery life. Still, if you frequently work on the go and value portability above all else, then the UX305 is ideal.

SPECIFICATIONS

800MHz Intel Core M 5Y10 dual-core processor • 8GB memory • 128GB SSD • Intel HD 5300 integrated graphics • 13.3in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 802.11ac/a/b/g/n • Windows 8.1 • 1.2kg (1.4kg with charger) • 12x324x226mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty

www.snipca.com/15975

VERDICT: This almost flawless ultra-portable laptop is superb value

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: Asus ZenBook UX303LA £695

Thicker, a little noisier and 200g heavier, but with much faster performance and comparable battery life

LAPTOP | **£180** from www.snipca.com/15929

HP Stream 11

A cheap and colourful laptop, but far from cheerful

HP's Stream 11 stands out from the crowd with its flamboyant bright purple casing. The wrist rest has a subtle polka-dot pattern, which gets lighter from top to bottom. This isn't as distracting as it sounds and the whole thing is sturdily made.

At just £180, the Stream 11 is incredibly cheap for a Windows 8.1 laptop. Despite its bargain price, it's light (1.3kg) and its battery survived an impressive 10 and a half hours in our light-usage test. This is a great return for such a low-cost laptop and is due in large part to its energy-efficient Intel Celeron N2840 processor.

While it conserves battery life, the performance of this processor was disappointing. It's too slow for demanding tasks like editing photos and videos. We could live with that, if it didn't also struggle with more everyday tasks such as web browsing and office work. When we opened several browser tabs or programs simultaneously the laptop's responsiveness came to a virtual standstill. While the slow processor is partly to blame, the measly 2GB of memory doesn't help and just isn't sufficient for a Windows computer.

Among the extras is a Microsoft Office 365 subscription (free for one year). You'll probably need to rely on USB or online storage though, because almost half the 32GB SSD is already occupied out of the box. You get 1TB of OneDrive storage free for a year and 25GB of Dropbox storage free for six months.

The keyboard feels a tad spongy, but it's comfortable to type on, with large keys that provide enough feedback and travel. The touchpad is more flawed. Although spacious, it wasn't particularly accurate and sometimes struggled to distinguish between a button tap and a movement of the cursor.

The screen looks washed out with poor contrast and tight viewing angles. It's reasonably bright, but we've tested other budget laptops with more vibrant screens. At 11.6in, the screen is relatively small and the 1366x768 resolution can make text hard to read if your eyesight is less than perfect.

The Stream 11 – and other similar computers such as Toshiba's Satellite CL10 (see our review, Issue 439) – is an attempt by Microsoft to take on Chromebooks by cramming Windows into the cheapest laptops possible. Unfortunately, the hardware just isn't up to it. If you want a light laptop for around £200, you should opt for the Asus Chromebook C200 (see our review, Issue 432). If you want a cheap Windows laptop, then you'll have to settle for the heavier and slightly more expensive Asus X555L (see Buy It! page 30).

VERDICT: You'll need the patience of a saint when using this slow laptop

★★☆☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: Asus Chromebook C200 £200 A far superior budget ultra-portable laptop, as long as you're happy to use Chrome OS instead of Windows

SPECIFICATIONS

2.16GHz Intel Celeron N2840 dual-core processor • 2GB memory • 32GB SSD • Intel integrated graphics • 11.6in 1366x768-pixel screen • 802.11b/g/n • Windows 8.1 • 1.3kg (1.6kg with charger) • 20x300x206mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/15930

The best... Accessories

Lindy 1m USB-to-Micro B/ Lightning Combo Cable

£20 from www.snipca.com/15993

A handy micro USB cable that has a tethered Lightning adapter, so it can charge both Apple and non-Apple mobile devices.

Motorola Moto Hint

£74 from www.snipca.com/15994

An impressively small Bluetooth headset for smartphones that also works with personal assistants such as Siri and Google Now. A lipstick-sized USB charging cradle is included.

Native Union Night Cable

£34 from www.snipca.com/15995

A 3m cable for charging your smartphone or tablet that has a large weighted knot in it to prevent your device from sliding off your desk and falling into hard-to-reach nooks and crannies. It comes in Lightning and micro USB versions.

Maplin 1.5m Six Socket UFO Extension Cable

£13 from www.snipca.com/15996

A compact, space-saving gangplug with six plug sockets.

PRINTER | **£227** from www.snipca.com/16007

HP Colour LaserJet Pro M277

Computer active GREAT PICK ★★★★☆

A small and well-designed colour printer that also scans, makes copies and sends faxes

HP's Color LaserJet Pro MFP M277dw is a multi-function colour laser printer (MFP). Its basic functions include sending and receiving faxes, and making colour prints, scans or photocopies, but that's just the start of things. Connect it to your network using either an Ethernet cable or the built-in Wi-Fi adapter, and you can share it with everyone at home. As expected for a modern MFP, it also supports a wide range of additional features, all of which are controlled using a colour touchscreen.

The M277dw isn't as big as you would expect for a laser printer and it has an impressively unfussy casing. The off-white plastic is broken up with the minimum of vents and flaps, and the use of a touchscreen means that the only physical button is the power switch. At more than 15 kilograms it's deceptively heavy, though – we'd recommend getting help to lift it.

> "The touchscreen is excellent – it's like using a smartphone"

At the base is the paper-input tray which is easy to pull out and load. It's good for only 150 sheets, though; some rival MFPs manage 250 or more. Above this is a bypass slot for a single page of one-off media, such as an envelope or headed paper. Printed pages come to rest on top of the printer, above which is the scanner and its 50-sheet automatic document feeder (ADF). Using this, you can make unattended photocopies or scans of long multi-page documents.

The touchscreen is excellent. While it isn't that large, it has clear icons and responds quickly to taps and gestures – it's like using a simplified smartphone. From here you can control basic tasks such as faxes or copies, but there are more advanced options, such as printing a file stored on a USB stick or saving a scan to one. The USB port itself is located just underneath the touchscreen.

There are multiple ways of printing from iOS and Android devices. You can use Apple's AirPrint or HP's ePrint – the latter lets you simply email the files you want to print to the printer itself. There's also support for Google Cloud Print, which lets you print documents from a Chromebook or indeed any computer connected to the internet. Of course, you needn't bother with any of this if you don't own any of these devices; there's conventional Windows software too.

Tested with our PC, the M277dw printed five pages of black text in 27 seconds, and took the same time to print five pages of business graphics. While that's some way off the claimed rate of 18 pages per minute (ppm), it began to approach this on longer jobs, reaching 14.5ppm over 20 pages. Photocopies weren't sluggish either, with a single black copy needing only 14 seconds, while a 10-page copy completed in just 45 seconds – it was barely any slower in colour. Scans were also fast: it took us just 12 seconds to capture an A4 document at 300 dots per inch (dpi): a middling amount of detail.

Scan quality was more than good enough for archiving documents and other office work, while black prints and copies were excellent. We were disappointed, however, with the accuracy of colours in photocopies and prints. The former were a little dark and dingy, while the latter tended to have a bluish tint.

This MFP takes four separate colour toner cartridges which are available in both standard and high-capacity varieties. It's cheaper to use the latter, resulting in a cost of 9.2p per page of mixed text and colour graphics, while printing just black text costs 2p per page. That's not unreasonable for a laser MFP at this price, but a comparable inkjet MFP would cost less to buy and run. Despite some strengths, then, the Color LaserJet Pro MFP M277 is only fair value.

SPECIFICATIONS

600x600dpi maximum print resolution • 18ppm colour and mono quoted speeds • 1200x1200dpi maximum scan resolution • USB2 • Gigabit Ethernet • Wi-Fi • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/16008

VERDICT: This MFP has plenty of easy-to-use features, but we're disappointed by its colour prints and copies, and we wish it was cheaper to run

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Epson WorkForce Pro WF-5620DWF £218

An inkjet MFP with lower running costs and better print and scan quality

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PRINTER | **£135** from www.snipca.com/15869

Canon Maxify MB5050

An attractive MFP for small and home offices

Canon markets the Maxify MB5050 as a small office MFP and in theory, it's superior to most inkjet printers aimed at the home. It can achieve print speeds of 23 pages per minute (ppm) in black and 15ppm colour and it has an Ethernet port in addition to USB and Wi-Fi. Plus, this model accepts high-capacity ink cartridges, which should mean lower running costs.

The MB5050 is striking for a printer with a front panel that looks like brushed metal, despite being made from plastic. At the top, the 50-page automatic document feeder (ADF) folds shut when not in use. The hinges of the scanner lid extend so that it can accommodate bulky material such as magazines. Unlike on Canon's more expensive Maxify models, the ADF here can't scan both sides of a document automatically, but the printer does support duplex printing. Sitting below the output tray is a reasonably high-capacity 250-sheet paper input tray, but there's no special feed for items other than standard paper, such as envelopes and card stock.

There's a colour touchscreen which you can use to access files stored on online storage services, such as Dropbox, and print them without using your computer. It's unlikely you'll want to do this often, though, because the touchscreen is very small and didn't respond well to our finger presses. You can print from your tablet or smartphone using Apple AirPrint and Google Cloud Print.

In certain areas, the MB5050 performs brilliantly. It's an extremely quick mono printer, delivering 25 pages of text at 21.4ppm, and a single mono photocopy in just eight seconds. Copying 10 pages took only 48 seconds. Scans are fast at low-to-middling resolutions, with a 300 dots-per-inch (dpi) A4 capture taking just 14 seconds, but a 1,200dpi photo scan took a less impressive 68 seconds. It printed colour pages quickly, with our 24-page graphics test arriving at 6.3ppm. It took a lengthy four minutes to duplex print 10 colour sides on five pages, however.

Scan quality was of a very high standard, while mono prints and copies were also very good. We were a little disappointed with colour prints and copies on plain paper, however. Colours seemed drab, especially when compared to those from rival printers. Print costs are very attractive, though, at about 4.1p for a page of mixed text and colour graphics, and just 0.9p for a page of text.

The MB5050 is a very good MFP, especially in terms of costs. Epson's WorkForce Pro WF-5620DWF is more impressive, but it costs almost £100 more.

SPECIFICATIONS

1200x600dpi maximum print resolution • 23ppm colour and 15ppm mono quoted speeds • 1200x 1200dpi maximum scan resolution • Ethernet • USB • Wi-Fi • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/15870

VERDICT: Canon's Maxify MB5050 is a great MFP with a few colour flaws

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Epson WorkForce Pro WF-5620DWF £218 Dearer but faster colour-print speeds, speedier colour scanning, better colour-print quality and cheaper colour costs

WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

What's the best keyboard and mouse for RSI?

Q **I've developed rather painful RSI after years of bad posture and other sloppy computer-usage habits. I'm now looking to replace the generic keyboard and mouse that came with my PC with more healthy alternatives. What would you suggest?**

Emilie Bertrand

A There are lots of ergonomic keyboards and mice available and which ones will suit you depend on the severity of your condition and your needs. We'd start with the Microsoft Sculpt Ergonomic Keyboard (£49 from www.snipca.com/16011). Its design is supposed to ensure your arms and hands are in a more natural position when typing – one of our RSI-afflicted writers swears by it.

We'd suggest skipping a mouse in favour of a trackball. You only move the ball only using your fingers, instead of moving an entire mouse with your hand. It won't suit everyone, but another of our writers won't be parted from his Kensington Orbit Laser Trackball (£25 from www.snipca.com/16012).

Finally, it may be worth trying voice-recognition software instead of a keyboard and mouse to type and control your PC. Nuance Dragon NaturallySpeaking 13 Home is the best available (£80 from www.snipca.com/16013).

Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

GAME | **£23** from www.snipca.com/15991

Cities: Skylines

The city-building game better than SimCity

City-building games are great fun and have been around for decades, but the genre is difficult to get right. The latest SimCity (see our review, Issue 397), for example, may have beautiful graphics, but gameplay is over-simplified and unbalanced, and playing it requires a constant internet connection. However, Cities: Skylines gets it right.

The game revolves around keeping the citizens of your city happy, employed and spending money. Keep them content by providing them with schools, parks, hospitals, police stations and other services and amenities. Key to this game are zones – residential, commercial, industrial and offices - which you place wherever you see fit. If there's sufficient demand for new buildings, these zones automatically fill up with houses, flats, offices, shops and industrial estates that your citizens will flock to for work and leisure. While planning these areas is up to you, the actual construction and management of these buildings is handled by the game, so your main responsibility is balancing the budget and smoothing out any problems.

> "Cities: Skylines is the city-building game we've been clamouring for and beats the 2013 SimCity"

You unlock more types of building, transportation options and services as your city's population grows. You can buy more land to expand your city's borders – assuming you have also increased your finances – to accommodate your booming population. Thanks to the wonderfully detailed graphics, zooming into your city and watching a neighbourhood going about its business has a bewitching charm similar to that of a model railway.

Each zone is divided into districts. To appease the citizens of each, you can choose specific policies, such as lower taxes, a ban on pets and free smoke detectors. You can also change a district's economic speciality, effectively creating towns dedicated to, for example, ore mining, oil drilling, logging or farming. Get the right mix and you'll boost both your finances and the happiness of your citizens. Plus, this also allows for enormous creative freedom, letting you effectively create multiple towns within one map, each with different specialities and residents, but all connected by your roads and public transport systems.

Your city's roads will become gridlocked if you fail to plan ahead, especially as traffic behaviour, while intriguing, is unrealistic and flawed, sometimes resulting in tricky-to-solve congestion. As the traffic piles up your ambulances can't make it to their patients, fire trucks can't get to emergencies and the bin men can't pick up the rubbish. Everything quickly starts to fall apart.

Although traffic behaviour is bizarre, troubleshooting your tailbacks is great fun. Going from a three-mile jam to free-flowing traffic with some road tweaking and public transport is very rewarding. It can be overwhelming at first: if you're struggling, tutorials made by other players (such as the one at www.snipca.com/15992) are great starting points.

Despite this, the game can become a little too easy. There's no equivalent to the disasters in the SimCity games, such as tornadoes and earthquakes, which keep you on your toes.

There are other irritations: you can't build tunnels, although the game's developers say they're working on it. There's also an annoying Twitter-like news feed that displays messages from your citizens, which quickly become repetitive and lack the charm and humour of similar feeds in older SimCity games.

Despite these quibbles, Cities: Skylines is the city-building game we've been clamouring after for a decade, and it beats the 2013 SimCity hands down thanks to more in-depth gameplay, bigger cities and better transport management. If you ever get bored, more than 10,000 player-made add-ons are now available, adding even more depth to the game. Whether you're a wannabe mayor or just want to while away a rainy day, Cities: Skylines is great fun.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows XP or later • 3GHz Intel Core 2 Duo processor or faster • 4GB of memory • Nvidia GeForce GTX 260 or AMD Radeon HD 5670 graphics card or faster • 4GB of available hard-drive space www.snipca.com/15991

VERDICT: Not a perfect city builder, but hugely addictive and beautiful

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: SimCity 4 Deluxe Edition £10 The best SimCity game ever made now available at a bargain price. There are loads of player-made add-ons and it has less demanding system requirements, so it'll run on very old PCs

CAMERA | **£649** from www.snipca.com/15911

Panasonic Lumix GM5

A tiny camera with interchangeable lenses

The Panasonic Lumix GM5 is one of those rare cameras that have interchangeable lenses, but still fit into your pocket or small handbag. It's a great selling point for anyone attracted to the benefits of a CSC, but still find them too big. It's an update to the Lumix GM1 (see our review, Issue 413) and while it adds new features, its weight has only nudged up by 5g.

The most significant addition is the eyepiece. This comes into its own when shooting in direct sunlight and the reflections on the screen can make life difficult. Holding the camera up against your eye can also help to avoid camera shake. The image it shows is a tad small and not very bright, but we're still happy

> "A great camera, if a little overpriced, given the modest improvements"

to have it. It's a shame the screen isn't hinged, which would provide even greater flexibility when shooting.

The 3in screen now has a widescreen aspect ratio. That means your videos will display without any black bars, though they will be present when viewing photos shot in the standard 4:3 aspect ratio. It's also a touchscreen, as before, making it very easy to change focus.

The buttons and dials have been reorganised, with a new command dial that you push in to switch between various exposure controls. This is handy, even if it is a little stiff for our liking. Alongside the command dial are two buttons that can be customised to perform 46 functions. By default, one switches your view between the screen and the eyepiece, while the other button launches the wireless-related features, such as backing up photos to your smartphone.

Another major change is that the flash is now a detachable unit. You'll have to be careful you don't lose it, but its detachability does give you more flexibility. It uses a standard hotshoe fitting, which lets you use larger flashguns, although there seems little point with such a compact camera. The ability to attach a trigger for a wireless flash is useful though.

As with the GM1, it's amazing how few compromises Panasonic has made in its quest for miniaturisation. The bundled lens has a respectable 3x zoom and retracts when not in use, so that it juts out just 29mm from the body of the camera. It's comfortable to hold for such a slender device, but we'd still have preferred a built-in grip (an optional, very expensive add-on handgrip is available for £90 from www.snipca.com/15914). The battery life (around 210 shots) is one casualty of the war on size.

Performance is up to scratch. It took just one second to power up and take a photo, and half a second between shots in normal use. Autofocus is consistently quick, and no corners have been cut in video and photo quality. The quality of video in particular was impressive, with remarkably crisp, smooth details. Colour accuracy was likewise excellent, while noise levels were satisfyingly low.

In photos, the finer details were incredibly sharp – even at the maximum 3x zoom of the included lens. Subtle textures were reproduced faithfully with only the merest hint of noise. As usual, switching from JPEG to RAW file format gave the best results. Skin tones were smooth and natural, while tricky lighting conditions were handled well. Noise levels were a little high though compared with photos taken by Sony CSCs that have larger sensors.

The Lumix GM5 is a great camera, but it's a little overpriced given the modest nature of its improvements over the GM1. That earlier model (with the same lens) is still available for £429 (from www.snipca.com/15915). If its pocket-sized dimensions don't float your boat, then a slightly bigger CSC, such as Sony's Alpha A5000, would be even better value.

SPECIFICATIONS

16-megapixel sensor • 3x zoom (12-32mm) • eyepiece • 3in screen • Accepts SD, SDHC, SDXC storage cards • Compatible with Micro Four Thirds lenses • 346g • 60x99x60mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/15913

VERDICT: It's charmingly small and has great image quality, but unless you believe less is more, there are better-value alternatives

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Sony A5000 £259

A smaller selection of compatible lenses and a little bulkier, but image quality is just as good, if not better

LAPTOP | **£1300** from www.snipca.com/15909

Toshiba Kira 107

A sleek and light laptop that's undergone a nip and tuck

The Kira 107 is an updated version of Toshiba's excellent Kira 101 ultra-portable laptop (also known as the Kirabook, see our review in Issue 424). The 107 retains the same slender, sturdy and stylish metallic casing as its predecessor, but inside you'll find one of Intel's latest processors.

The dual-core Core i7 5500U runs at 2.4GHz and is paired with 8GB of memory, so it's certainly quick enough to be your main computer. That said, it's only slightly faster than the previous-generation Core i7 processor in the Kira 101. More frustrating is the irritatingly loud processor-cooling fan. Fiddling with Windows' power options helped alleviate this somewhat, but it's still a pain.

Disappointingly, and despite the new energy-efficient processor, battery life is only on a par with the previous model. It's still a decent 13 and a half hours, but other laptops can achieve even more. Nevertheless, this is still more than good enough for working on the go and the Kira's weight (1.3kg) makes it easy to carry.

The colour accuracy and contrast of the 13in screen are excellent, although the colours can fall victim to the screen's narrow viewing angles and slight grainy sheen. Just like the Kira 101, the display has a sky-high resolution of 2560x1440 pixels (which is one of the main reasons the price is sky high too). This results in sharp text and exceptionally detailed images. There are a few Windows programs that still don't work properly on compact, high-resolution screens like this (displaying tiny, illegible text), but most popular software is now compatible.

The screen is touch-sensitive, but using it for extended periods of time is a recipe for arm ache. It's far more comfortable to use the keyboard and touchpad instead. While the touchpad is still not quite on a par with the very best, it's far more responsive and accurate than that on the Kira 101. We could touch-type on the keyboard quickly and without making errors, but it could still be better. The keys lack a little travel and therefore feel quite shallow, but we got used to them after some practice.

The Kira 107 is a good laptop with a lot going for it, but it adds up to a pretty modest upgrade on its predecessor. It's still one of the best ultra-portable Windows laptops available, despite its irritating flaws, but we expect it to be overtaken soon by laptops made by Toshiba's rivals that will also come equipped with Intel's latest processors.

SPECIFICATIONS

2.4GHz Intel Core i7 3500U dual-core processor • 8GB memory • 256GB SSD • Intel HD 5500 integrated graphics chip • 13.3in 2560x1440-pixel screen • 802.11ac/a/b/g/n • Windows 8.1 • 1.3kg (1.6kg with charger) • 20x316x207mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/15910

VERDICT: A good laptop, but barely changed from its predecessor

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Asus ZenBook UX303LA £683 It's 200g heavier and has a lower-resolution screen, but it does come with a comparable keyboard and similar battery life at a much lower price

COMING SOON

MAY 2015

Microsoft has announced the Surface 3, a cheaper and lighter version of the Surface Pro 3 tablet. It'll have a 10.8in 1080p screen, the new Atom X7 processor and weigh 622g. Unlike the Surface 2, it will use Windows 8.1 and not Windows RT.

SUMMER 2015

Sony has announced that all but one model in its 2015 range of smart TVs will use Google's Android TV interface and have YouView built in.

AUTUMN 2015

Humax has announced it will make Freeview Play-branded PVRs (personal video recorders). These set-top boxes will have catch-up TV apps and built-in Wi-Fi in addition to video recording.

AUTUMN 2015

Apple is rumoured to be working on a 12in iPad Pro which will reportedly come with a stylus and the ability to run multiple apps on screen side by side.

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Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Asus X555LA-XX290H

£320 from www.snipca.com/16014
Tested: Issue 446

Asus has made all the right choices with this budget Windows 8.1 laptop. Its comfortable keyboard, fast performance, respectably lengthy battery life and bright screen are all the more impressive given its low price.

ALTERNATIVE Asus Chromebook C200
A cheap Chrome OS ultra-portable laptop with a bright screen, lengthy battery life and a great keyboard. £190 from www.snipca.com/15269

DESKTOP PC

Palicomp AMD Kaveri Evolution

£500 from www.snipca.com/11804
Tested: Issue 422

A budget PC with a fast overclocked processor. It also has good upgrade potential and comes with a surprisingly good 24in monitor, as well as a quality USB keyboard and mouse.

ALTERNATIVE: Chillblast Fusion Rhino
A very powerful and compact PC sold without a keyboard, mouse or monitor. £899 from www.snipca.com/15252

TABLET

Apple iPad Mini 2

£239 from www.snipca.com/14467
Tested: Issue 416

Apple's mini tablet from 2013 is now available at an even lower price. The only thing it lacks compared with the Mini 3 is a fingerprint sensor and the option of lots of built-in storage. Otherwise, it's an absolute bargain.

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPad Air 2 A thin and lightweight 10in tablet with a fingerprint reader, an excellent screen and peerless selection of apps. £399 from www.snipca.com/14309

PHONE

Motorola Moto G 4G

£150 (without contract) from www.snipca.com/14162
Tested: Issue 432

Motorola's budget Android smartphone is an absolute steal. It's very responsive, well made, fast and has a good screen. Plus, it's now been updated with 4G and a microSD card slot.

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPhone 5s
An excellent smartphone with a great camera and performance. £459 without a contract from www.snipca.com/10171

DIGITAL CAMERA

Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF6

£270 from www.snipca.com/12607
Tested: Issue 405

This compact interchangeable-lens camera is small and reasonably priced, yet it has well-designed controls, a wide range of available lenses and shoots excellent quality photos. The GF6 really is unbeatable value.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony A5000 A rival CSC with better low-light performance, although its controls and range of available lenses aren't quite as good. £259 from www.snipca.com/15854

E-READER

Kobo Aura H2O

£140 from www.snipca.com/15490
Tested: Issue 435

A waterproof e-reader with an easy-to-read, high-resolution touchscreen that's easy on the eyes and great for reading in the bath. There's no 3G version, but, unlike the Amazon Kindle, you can buy ebooks from independent retailers that use the ePub format.

ALTERNATIVE: Amazon Kindle Voyage
The best Kindle yet, with a sharp, extremely responsive touchscreen and easy-grip design. £169 from www.snipca.com/14451

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2015

£17.99 from www.snipca.com/14212
Tested: Issue 427

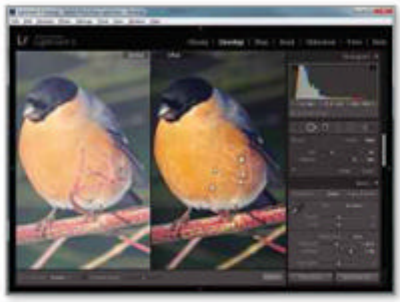
Kaspersky Internet Security 2015 has won our past four antivirus tests – an unprecedented set of results. The 2015 edition is available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Click the link above for a one-device licence, or buy a three-device licence for just £39.99 at www.snipca.com/14221.

ALTERNATIVE: Norton Internet Security 2014 An affordable program, but sometimes blocked legitimate software. £30 from www.snipca.com/15115

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 5

£98 from www.snipca.com/14348
Tested: Issue 402



Lightroom is a consistently elegant, powerful and fast photo-management program packed with sophisticated features. If you want to keep on top of your photos and make them look great, there's no better software to do it with.

ALTERNATIVE: Adobe Photoshop Elements 13 A fast and polished photo-editing program with excellent advanced editing tools. £57 from www.snipca.com/14731

PC MONITOR

Dell UltraSharp U2412M

£214 from www.snipca.com/14610
Tested: Issue 378

An exquisite monitor with superb image quality, an adjustable stand, a high resolution and even a built-in USB hub. It costs a little more than other monitors, but it's money well spent. It's easily the best-value monitor we've seen and is the one by which all others are judged.

ALTERNATIVE: AOC i2360PHU A good quality budget 23in monitor that's easily adjustable and has a built-in USB 2.0 hub too. £153 from www.snipca.com/15274

SECURITY CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

£147 from www.snipca.com/11646
Tested: Issue 420

A home-security camera that's well priced and easy to set up. Plus, it has great picture quality, useful apps and there's no need to subscribe to any extra services. It's a worthy successor to the original HomeMonitor, our previous favourite security camera.

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link Wireless N Day & Night Camera A good-value security camera with excellent night vision. £85 from www.snipca.com/15275

ROUTER

Trendnet TEW-812DRU

£112 from www.snipca.com/15855
Tested: Issue 427

An incredibly fast 802.11ac router that's also one of the cheapest we've seen. It's superb and it's the router to buy if you're ready to make the jump to 802.11ac.

ALTERNATIVE: Linksys WRT1900AC More expensive, but even faster and with loads of features too. £200 from www.snipca.com/14950

NAS

Synology DiskStation DS213j

£125 from www.snipca.com/16015
Tested: Issue 404

This NAS enclosure has it all – fast performance, easy configuration and plenty of extra features. It's not perfect – disk installation is a little fiddly and it's a tad pricey – but there are few other NAS devices we would rather buy.

ALTERNATIVE: Synology DS414j A four-drive NAS that's generally fast and easy to set up and use too. £262 from www.snipca.com/12545

WEB DESIGN

Serif WebPlus X8

£90 from www.snipca.com/15278
Tested: Issue 443

WebPlus X8 is one of the best programs available for designing a website without having to write a line of code. It comes with lots of templates, with more available for purchase if you need them. It also has lots of specialist tools for building a small business website.

ALTERNATIVE: Jimdo Pro This browser-based program for creating websites is slick and feature packed, but lacking in high-quality templates. £60 a year from www.jimdo.com/pricing

SMART TV

PRICE DROP

Samsung UE32H6200

£329 from www.snipca.com/16016
Tested: Issue 427

A stylish 32in smart TV with great picture quality and apps for all the terrestrial TV catch-up services. It has plenty of extras, too, such as recording-to-USB storage, 3D, playing media files stored on a NAS or USB stick, and plenty of HDMI ports.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony KDL-42W705B Excellent image quality, stylish looks and a 42in screen. £400 from www.snipca.com/12931

COMPETITION

Win 1 of 2
TP-LINK TD-W8980 dual-band routers

Easy to set up and made from sleek, glossy plastic, TP-LINK's TD-W8980 is one of the best budget routers we've tested recently (see our 'Great Pick' review in Issue 445). It's a dual-band router, so it can operate on the 2.4GHz and 5GHz bands, hitting top speeds of 116.5Mbps at 10 metres and 93.2Mbps at 25 metres. This is impressive for such a well-priced router. To enter, email your address to cacomp@dennis.co.uk by midnight 28 April.

TP-LINK's TD-W8980 router is available to buy now priced £59. For more info visit http://uk.tp-link.com, follow TP-LINK on Twitter (@tplinkgaming) and 'like' TP-LINK's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/tplinkuk.

MULTIFUNCTION PRINTER

Canon Pixma MG4250

£50 from www.snipca.com/12457
Tested: Issue 382

This budget multifunction printer (MFP) isn't the fastest available, but it's cheap to buy and inexpensive to run. Just as importantly, both prints and scans look great. Unless you need faster print speeds or separate ink tanks for each colour, this MFP is the one to buy.

ALTERNATIVE: Canon Pixma MX535 An MFP aimed at small offices with duplex, ADF and fax, but also good photo print quality. £68 from www.snipca.com/15117

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Crucial BX100 1TB

£318 from www.snipca.com/16017
Tested: Issue 445

A blindingly fast, high-capacity SSD at a lower price than ever before. If you've been put off buying a SSD because of the cost, then now is finally the time to take the plunge. If the 1TB model we reviewed is still too pricey or just overkill for your needs, cheaper 120GB, 250GB and 500GB models are also available.

ALTERNATIVE: Samsung 850 Pro 256GB An even faster SSD, but it is much more expensive per gigabyte. £87 from www.snipca.com/16018

HOMEPLUGS

Devolo dLAN 1200 Triple+ Starter Kit

£119 from www.snipca.com/15369
Tested: Issue 444

Devolo's latest Homeplug adapters are the fastest we've ever seen. They're also well designed too, with a passthrough socket so you can still power another device and the design should avoid skirting boards and other obstacles.

ALTERNATIVE: Devolo dLAN 650 Triple+ Starter Kit These Homeplug adapters have a space-saving design and three Gigabit Ethernet ports for connecting multiple devices to your network. £77 from www.snipca.com/16019

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GLADIATOR REDSTONE

OPTIMISED FOR MINECRAFT

Processor: Intel Pentium K G3258 3.2GHz Dual Core
Graphics: NVIDIA GTX750 1024MB GDDR5
Memory: 4GB DDR3
Storage: 500GB SATA III Hard Drive
Opearting System: Windows 8.1 (64Bit)

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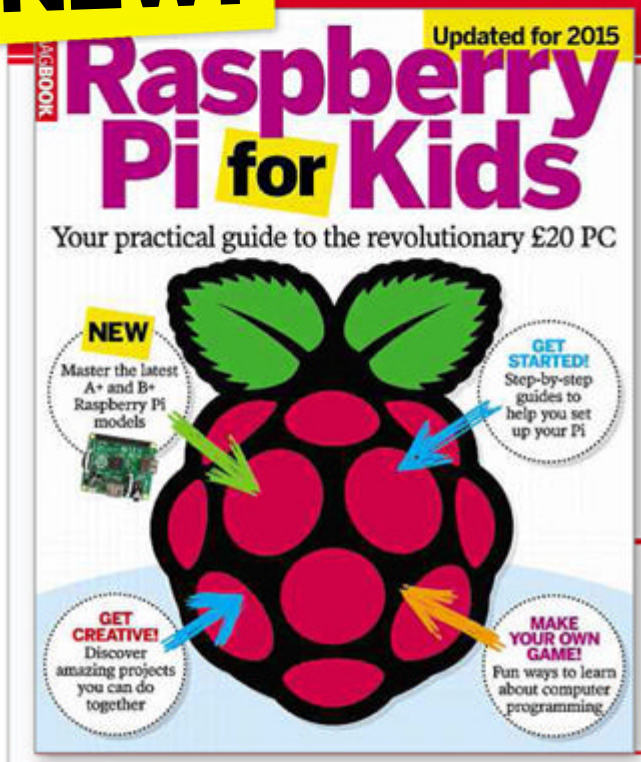

RASPBERRY PI FOR KIDS

The Raspberry Pi is the incredible £20 British computer that's taking the world by storm. It's ideal for children of all ages to experiment, play games and learn valuable skills. We've updated this 148-page book for 2015 to include instructions on mastering the new Pi models (A+ and B+), helping children learn the coding skills needed to excel at the new school curriculum. We take you step by step through the basics of setting up and configuring the Pi and introduce many fun projects for families.

BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
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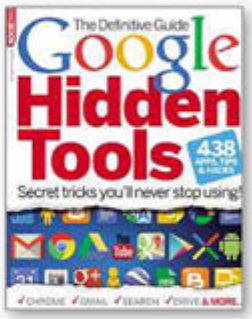
THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO GOOGLE HIDDEN TOOLS



Inside the 164-page *The Definitive Guide to Google Hidden Tools*, we lift the lid on Google's most popular tools to reveal more than 430 ways to make them even more efficient, useful and tailored to your needs. These include clever new add-ons for Chrome, amazing free apps for Android and stunning sights in Google Maps.

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Workshops & Tips

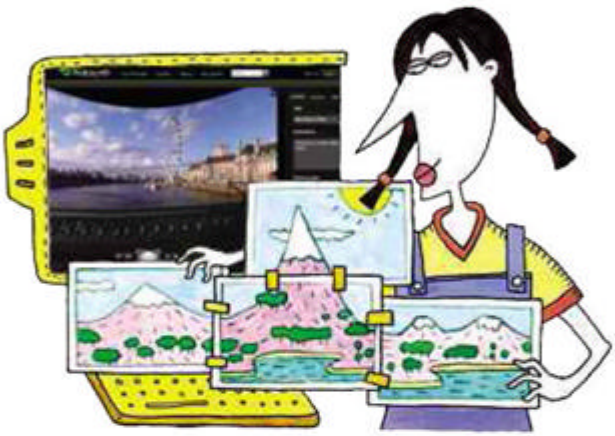
PULL OUT & KEEP Issue 447

14 pages of easy-to-follow workshops and expert tips

35 Make amazing panoramas from your photos
38 Take screenshots using Windows
40 Edit videos on your iPad
42 Create a fake virus to test your PC's security

PLUS
43 Readers' Tips
44 Phone & Tablet Tips
46 Make Windows Better
47 Make Office Better
48 Secret Tips For... Pixlr

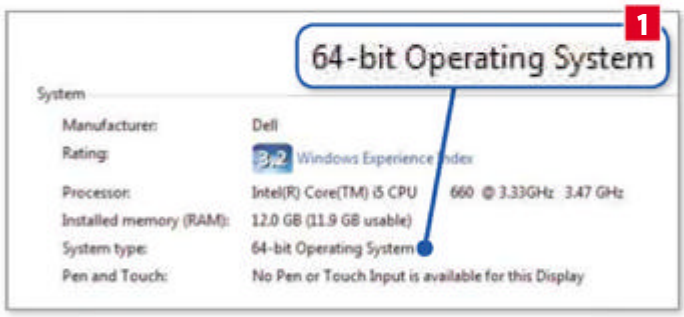
Make amazing panoramas from your photos

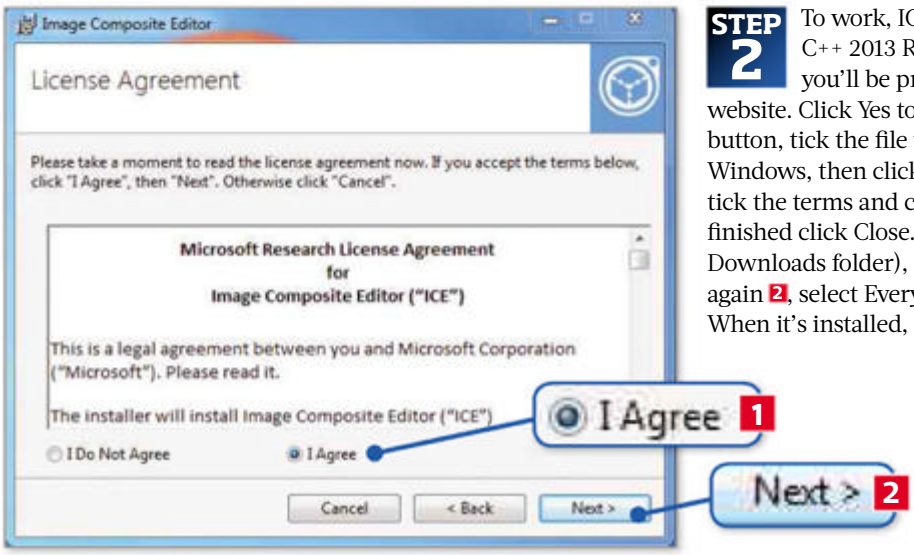


What you need: Image Composite Editor; Windows Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1
Time required: 45 minutes

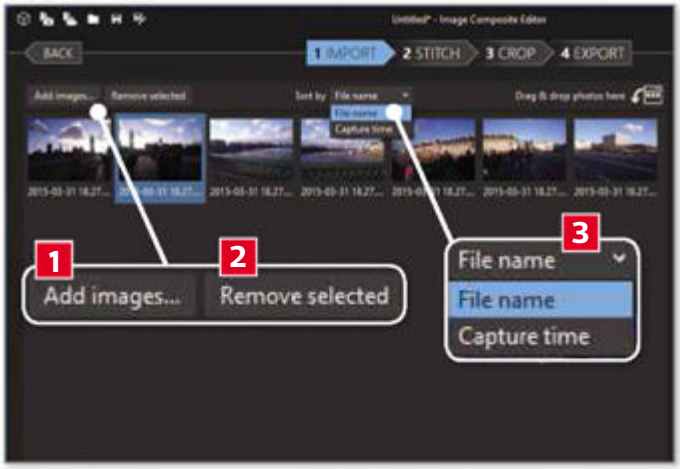
Image Composite Editor (ICE) is a free Microsoft program (released in 2008) that creates stunning panoramas of your photos by merging them. It has now been updated with a new interface and includes new tools that let you fill in any missing gaps in your panorama and upload it to Photosynth – a Microsoft website that lets you zoom in and out of your photos.

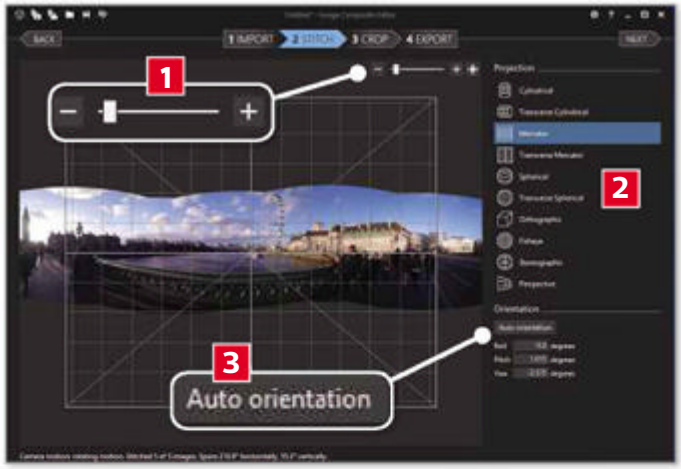
STEP 1 For convenience, you should first create a folder on your Desktop and save the photos you're planning to use in your panorama there (in this Workshop, we'll merge five images). Before downloading ICE, you'll need to determine your version of Windows (64bit or 32bit). To do that, right-click Computer on your Desktop or Start menu, then click Properties and look under 'System type' 1. Now go to www.snipca.com/16028 and click the Download ICE 2.0 option that corresponds to your PC. Next, click the Download button, then the setup file that downloads, and finally Run.





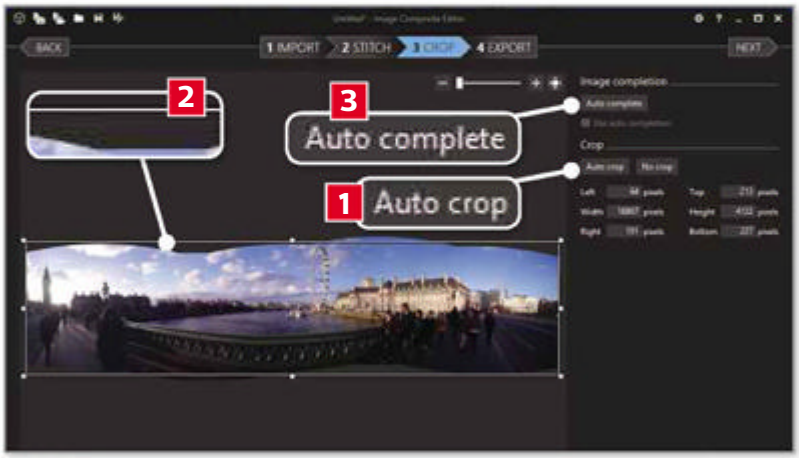
STEP 2 To work, ICE needs a feature called 'Microsoft Visual C++ 2013 Runtime Libraries'. If you don't have this, you'll be prompted to install it from the Microsoft website. Click Yes to go to the site, click the red Download button, tick the file that corresponds to your version of Windows, then click Next. Now click the downloaded file, Run, tick the terms and conditions box, then Install. When that's finished click Close. Now reopen your ICE setup file (in your Downloads folder), click Run, Next, tick I Agree 1, click Next again 2, select Everyone, then click Next (twice) to install it. When it's installed, click Close to open the program.





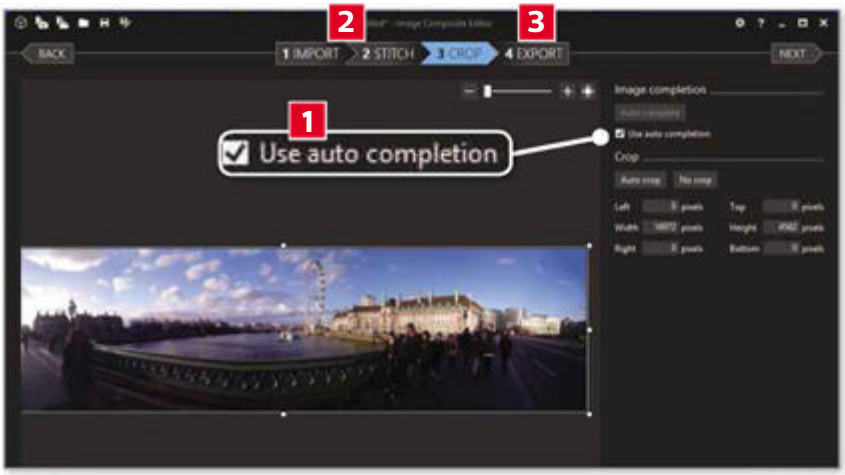
STEP 3 Click New Panorama From Images at the top left. Navigate to the folder you created on your Desktop, press Ctrl+A to select the photos, then click Open. You can add more by clicking 'Add images' 1 or by dragging and dropping them into the ICE window. To remove a photo, click it, then click 'Remove selected' 2. You can organise your photos by name or by the time they were taken using the 'Sort by' dropdown menu 3.

STEP 4 Make sure your photos are positioned in the order you want them merged (from left to right), then click Stitch at the top. ICE will automatically merge them to create a single panoramic view. You can zoom in and out using the zoom slider 1 or by clicking the image and scrolling your mouse wheel. Click the different Projection styles 2 to try the visual effects and find the one that best suits your panorama. If your panorama isn't straight, click 'Auto orientation' 3.

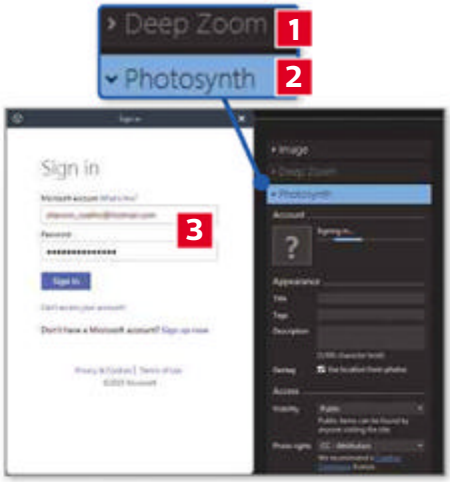


STEP 5 After selecting your Projection style (we selected Mercator – see screenshot), click Crop at the top (to change the Projection style, click Stitch to go back, select another Projection style, then click Crop). Next, click 'Auto crop' 1 to place a white (extendable) frame around your image. If there are empty black spaces 2 within your frame, click 'Auto complete' 3 to fill them spaces (this works best when filling flat expanses such as land or sky). The process can take a few minutes.

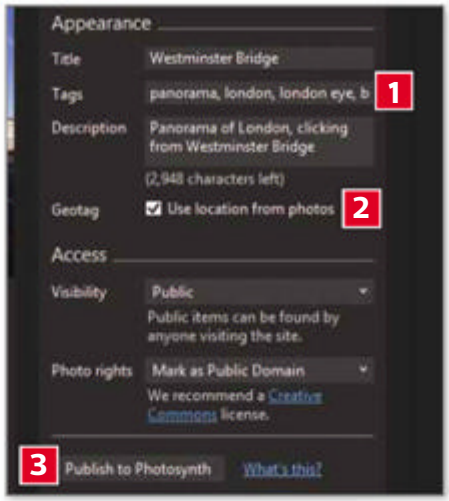
STEP 6 When that's finished, you should see a fully realised rectangular panoramic image. To compare this image to the pre-Auto complete version, untick 'Use auto completion' 1. You can return to earlier stages of the process (such as Import or Stitch 2) to make any changes. If you want to set the width and height (in pixels) of your panorama, type those values in the box on the right and click 'Auto crop'. When you're happy with your panorama, click Export 3.



STEP 7 To save your panorama, click the Image dropdown menu, and select JPEG Image 1 from the 'File format' dropdown menu (this is the best format for saving panoramas). Next, click the Quality dropdown menu and select Superb (it's set to High by default). Now type 100 in the field beside Quality 2. The resulting file will be larger but you'll see more detail. Finally, click 'Export to disk' 3, name the file, save it wherever you want on your PC, then click Save.



STEP 8 The Deep Zoom dropdown menu 1 lets you create a high-resolution image that you can upload online, but it only works with certain Projection styles and on websites that support interactive (pan and zoom) elements. A better option is to upload your image to Microsoft's free Photosynth website, where others can view it using pan and zoom options. To do this, click the Photosynth dropdown menu 2, then click 'Sign in' and log in using your Microsoft (Outlook or Hotmail) account 3.



STEP 9 Now, create a Photosynth ID, then click 'Create account'. Next, give your panorama a title, tags (keywords for search purposes) and a description 1. Tick 'Use location from photos' 2 (to pin your image's location on a map – see Step 10). Now select Public from the Visibility dropdown menu to let anyone see your image, then click the 'Photo rights' dropdown menu and select whether you want to copyright your image or make it freely available for others to use. Finally, click 'Publish to Photosynth' 3.

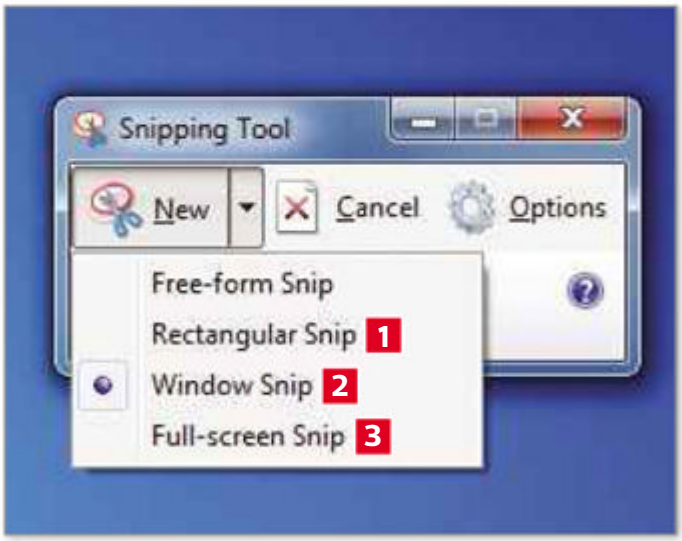
STEP 10 If you don't have Microsoft Silverlight installed, you'll be prompted to install it because panoramic photos on Photosynth can't be viewed without it. Click Install Microsoft Silverlight, then the downloaded setup file, followed by 'Install now' and Close. You'll now see an interactive (pan and zoom) version of your image on Photosynth. Use the controls 1 to zoom in and out of and pan across your image. You can edit your Title and Description 2 if you want. Clicking the Location tab 3 will display the precise location of your pictures in Bing Maps. If the pinned location is in the wrong place, click and drag it to the correct location, then click Save at the bottom.

Take screenshots using Windows

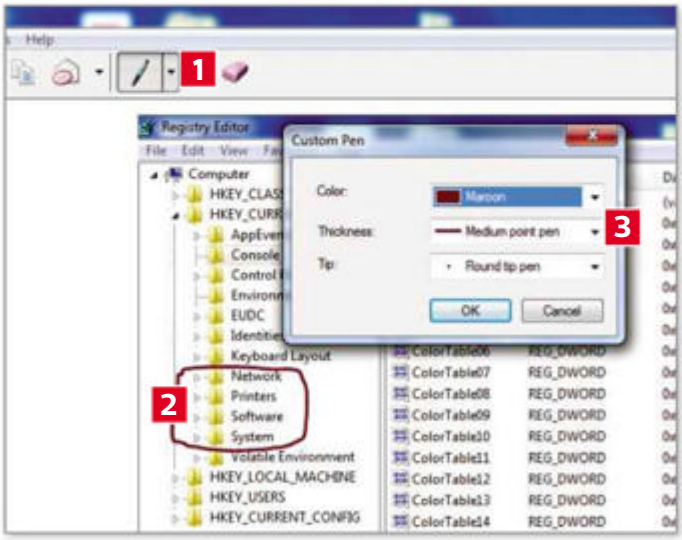
What you need: Windows Vista, 7, 8 or 10 **Time required:** 15 minutes

You don't need to install a third-party program to take screenshots on your PC because Windows lets you do this in a few easy steps. We'll explain the various features of Windows' Snipping Tool, which makes it easy to create screenshots of your entire Desktop, selected areas of it, or any open window. It also lets you draw on your screenshot or highlight sections of it. Finally, we'll explain how to create screenshots using keyboard shortcuts.

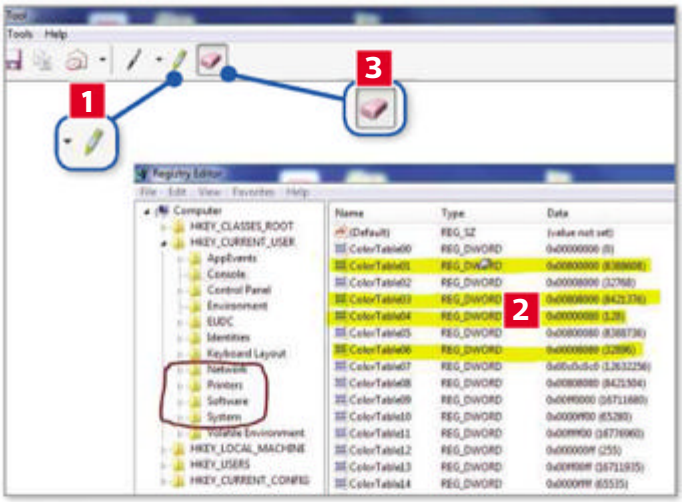
STEP 1 Click the Start button and type snipping tool to see the Snipping Tool listed 1. Drag and drop this option on to your Desktop to create a shortcut 2 (optional). Open the program and you'll see three options 3. Click the New dropdown menu to see four methods of creating a screenshot. Click the first option (Free-form Snip) and your entire screen will be greyed out and your cursor replaced by a scissors icon. Keeping your mouse clicked, drag your cursor carefully around the area you want to capture. When you release the mouse your screenshot will appear in a new window.



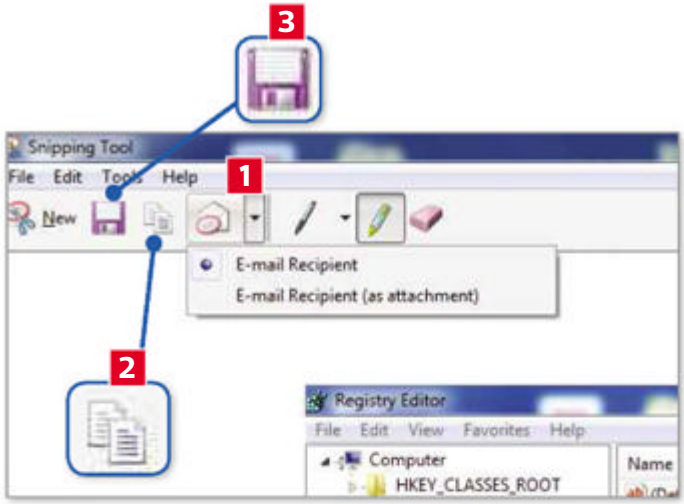
STEP 2 If you're happy with your screenshot, you can move to Step 3. Alternatively, you can try the other options. Click Rectangular Snip 1 to take a screenshot of a rectangular section of your screen (adjust it by clicking and dragging your cursor). Click Window Snip 2, point your cursor at any open window on your Desktop (such as a browser or a program) to highlight it with a red border, then click to take a screenshot of that window. Full-screen Snip 3 takes a screenshot of your entire Desktop.



STEP 3 If you're using a screenshot to illustrate a problem on your PC to someone, use the Pen and Highlight tools to flag up up specific screen elements. Click the Pen dropdown menu 1 and select one of the four colours. Keeping your mouse clicked, draw around the area you want to flag up 2. To change the colour, thickness and tip of the pen, click the Pen dropdown menu, then Customise to open the Custom Pen window. Use the dropdown menus 3 to change those values. Finally, click OK.

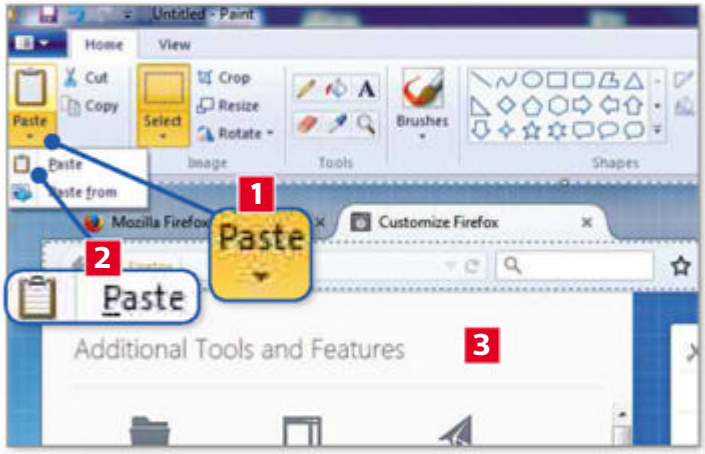


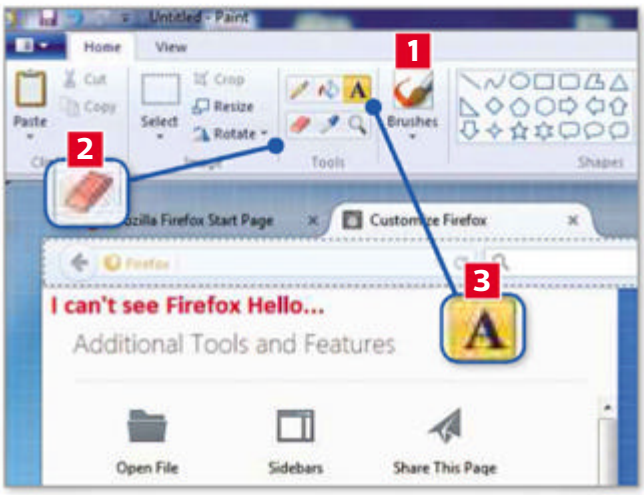
STEP 4 The Highlighter tool 1 lets you highlight anything in your screenshot 2, similar to highlighting text in a Word document. You can delete any mistakes you make by clicking the Eraser icon 3, then clicking the erroneous mark.



STEP 5 You can email, copy or save your screenshot. Click the Email dropdown menu 1 to see two options. Email Recipient adds the screenshot to the body of an email in your email program, while 'E-mail Recipient (as an attachment)' attaches it to an email. Click the Copy icon 2 to copy your screenshot, which you can then paste to any other program, such as Word or PowerPoint. Click the Save Snip icon 3, select where you want to save it, name your screenshot, then click Save.

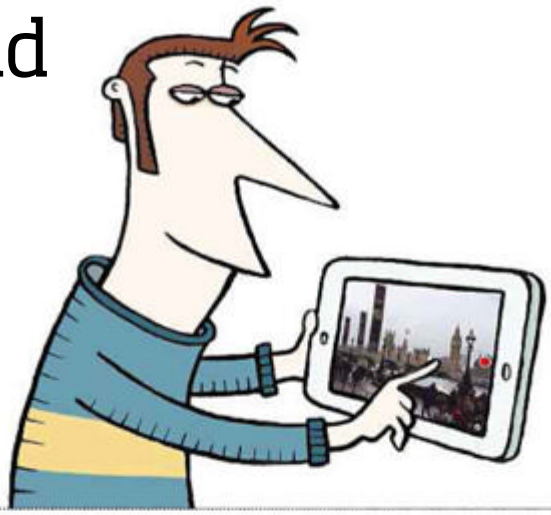
STEP 6 Alternatively you can use keyboard shortcuts to create screenshots, which you can then edit in Paint. To take a screenshot of your entire Desktop, press the Print Screen key on your keyboard. To take a screenshot of a specific window (such as Firefox), open the program and click the window, then keeping the Alt key pressed, press Print Screen. Your screenshot will be saved to your clipboard. To edit it in Paint, click the Start button, type paint and press Enter. Now click the Paste dropdown menu 1, then click Paste 2 to see your screenshot 3.





STEP 7 To crop your screenshot, click Select at the top left in Paint, click and drag your mouse to select the area you want to retain, right-click inside this area, then click Crop. To add your own marks (as you did in Step 3), click the Brushes icon 1. Use the Eraser 2 to delete any mistakes. Paint has an option to add a text box to your screenshot, which is useful if you want to explain a problem in greater detail. Click the A icon 3, then click and drag your cursor to position your text box. Next, click inside this box and start typing. You'll see options to change your font style, size and format at the top left. Press Ctrl+S to save this screenshot to your PC. ●

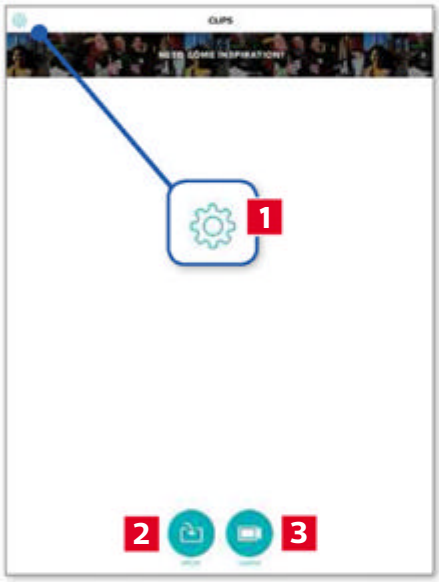
Edit videos on your iPad

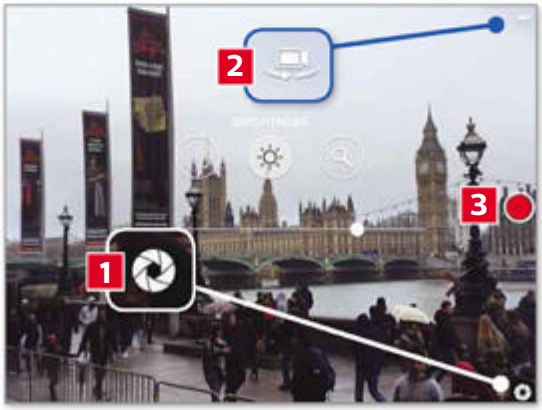


What you need: Clips Video Editor; iPhone or iPad
Time required: 35 minutes

Every iOS video-editing app has restrictions as to what you can do before you need to 'unlock' features with in-app purchases. Clips Video Editor is the best app of this type we've used. The free version lets you make professional edits with ease – including positioning video clips and adding transitions, a soundtrack and a voiceover – but adds a small app icon at the bottom left of your edited video. If you don't want this, it's worth upgrading to the paid-for version (£3.99 as a one-time purchase).

STEP 1 Install and open Clips Video Editor (www.snipca.com/16009) and follow the instructions. When you see the option, tap Continue at the top right (to skip the instructions). Now either tap 'Upgrade to pro - £3.99' to purchase the app (this removes the app icon from your final edit) or Skip (if you don't mind the icon). Next, tap the '+' icon to create your first video. The app lets you save a copy of your edited video to your iPad (not all editing apps offer this). To do this, tap the Settings icon 1, the slider beside 'Auto Save to Camera Roll', then Done at the top right. Now tap the '+' symbol at the bottom to see two options: Import 2 (to import video clips from your device) and Camera 3 (to shoot your own clips). To import clips, tap Import, select the clips you want to add (in any order), then tap Next and go to Step 4. If you want to shoot your own clips, go to Step 2.





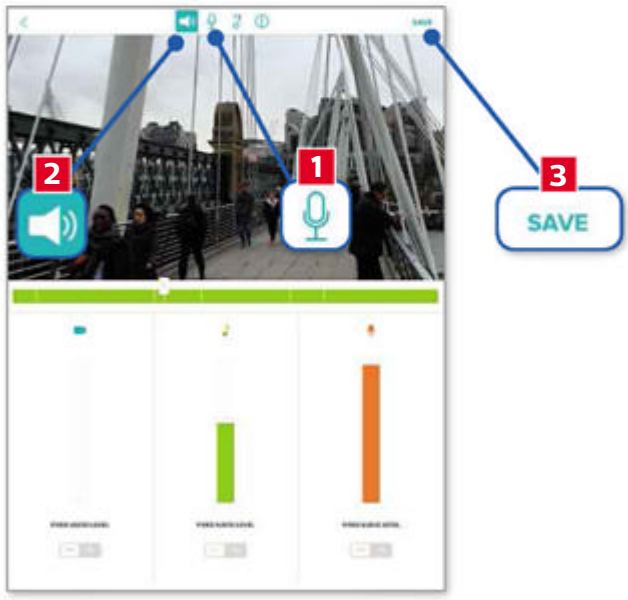
STEP 2 If you tapped Camera, the first time you use this option you'll be taken through mandatory instructions, for which you need to shoot a minimum of six clips. Hold your device in the landscape mode, then tap the small shutter icon 1 for options to change the area of focus, brightness and zoom range using sliders (other apps don't offer this). To record using your front camera, tap the rotate icon 2. Tap the Record button 3 to begin recording. A timer will appear at the top of your screen. Tap the Record button again to stop recording.

STEP 3 Now point your device at something else and repeat Step 2 to record. The timer 1 will continue from where you left off. If you're doing this for the first time, you'll need to repeat this step four more times. You'll see optional suggestions to shoot different types of video (for example, moving your camera, close ups, a still recording and so on). Tap the Bin icon 2 to delete the clip you're recording if you don't like it. When you've finished recording your clips, tap the green tick 3.

STEP 4 You're now prompted to add background music, so tap the musical note icon. This brings up a list of 12 free-to-use music tracks. You can also use tracks stored on your iPad by tapping Songs 1, selecting the track you want, then playing it. To start the song from a particular point, drag the white dot 2 to that point on the audio slider, tap the pause icon on the left, then tap Next 3 to add it to your video.

STEP 5 You'll now see a simple editing screen with four icons at the top, the video player in the middle, a green video timeline and your video clips below. Tap the player to play your clips in succession. To play an individual clip, tap its thumbnail 1. You can edit the length of a clip by moving its start and end sliders 2. To reposition a clip within the video, tap and hold the three lines beside it 3, then move it up or down. To remove a clip from the video, drag its slider from one end (left or right) to the other, then tap Remove. You can record or import another video clip by tapping the '+' symbol at the bottom and choosing Camera or Import.

STEP 6 By default, your clips will start and end quite abruptly within your montage. If you prefer more subtle fade in/fade out transitions, you can add dissolves. Tap the Transition icon at the top 1. You can either tap All Dissolves 2 to add one between every transition or Dissolve 3 to add it to individual transitions. Drag the slider on the green timeline to the start, then tap the video to play it and check you're happy with your edits.



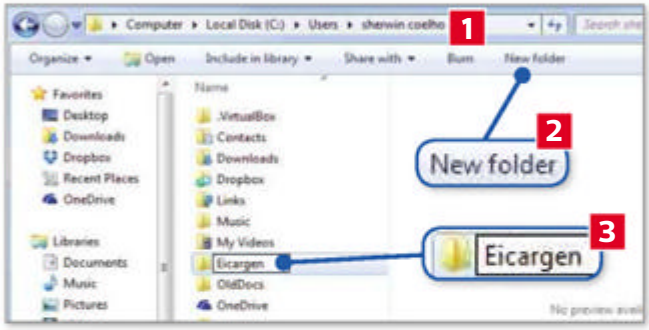
STEP 7 To add a voiceover to your video, tap the mic icon 1, then the red mic at the bottom and speak your voiceover as your video plays. Next, tap the Speaker icon 2. The blue, green and orange sliders represent the volume level of your clips, background music and voiceover respectively. Play your video and adjust the sliders. To save your edited video, tap Save 3, then tap the Photos icon at the bottom. If you didn't purchase the app (in Step 1), you'll see two options: 'Export with watermark' and 'No more watermarks £3.99'. Tap the one you want. After your video is saved, you can watch it in the app, as well as through the iOS Photos app on your iPad.

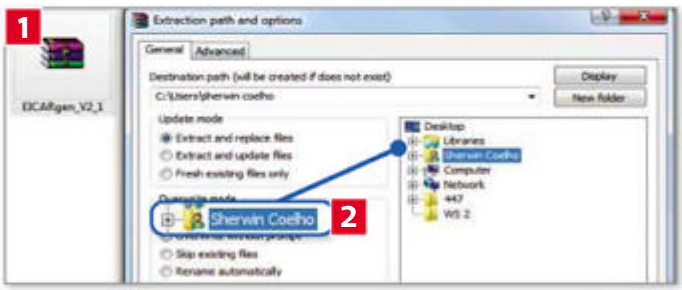
Create a fake virus to test your PC's security

What you need: WinRAR (or a similar file-compression program); EICARgen
Time required: 10 minutes

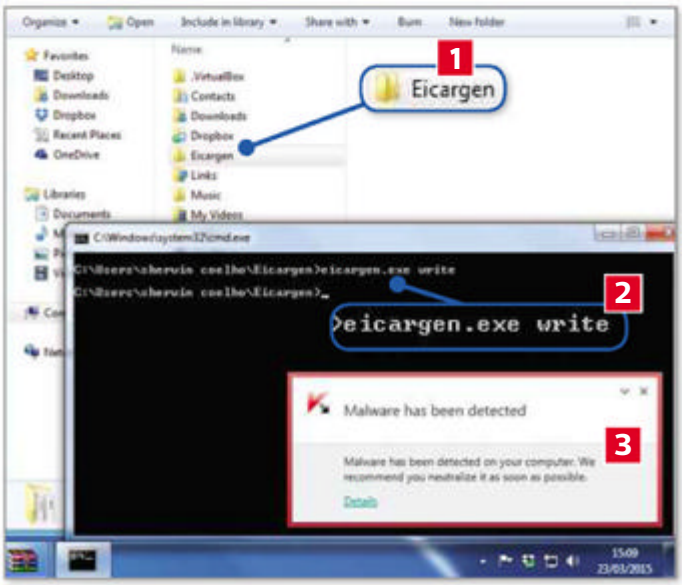
You depend on your PC's antivirus to keep you safe, but how can you be sure that it's working properly? EICARgen is a fake virus that you can download and run to assess how powerful your antivirus is. It's an easy, free and completely safe way to check your antivirus is safeguarding your PC properly. We'll show you how to do this in a few simple steps.

STEP 1 EICARgen is a zipped file, so you need a program that manages those (such as 7-Zip, PeaZip, WinZip or WinRAR). We're using the free WinRAR (www.snipca.com/15898), one of our favourite free programs. To download and install it, click the version (32bit or 64bit) that corresponds to your PC at the top of the web page. To find out your PC's version, right-click Computer on your Desktop or Start menu, Properties, then look under 'System type' in the System section. Next, create a new folder on your PC to save the extracted EICARgen file to. Open Computer, C Drive, Users and the folder with your Windows username 1. Now click 'New folder' 2 and name it Eicargen 3.





STEP 2 Now go to www.snipca.com/15896, scroll down and click the 'EICARgen_V2_1.zip' link (below the video) to download it. To extract the contents of this file to the Eicargen folder you created, navigate to the 'EICARgen_V2_1' zipped file (in your Downloads folder) 1, right-click it, then click 'Extract files'. In the pane that opens click the '+' symbol next to your name 2, select the Eicargen folder you created (in Step 1), then click OK. (This step may differ slightly if you're using a different file-compression program).



STEP 3 You now need to run the file from the Eicargen folder using Command Prompt. Navigate to the Eicargen folder, press and hold the Shift key, right-click the folder 1, then click 'Open command window here'. Type eicargen.exe write 2 in Command Prompt, then press Enter. Our favourite antivirus program (Kaspersky Internet Security 2015, see page 68) detected the file as malware 3. If yours doesn't, update your antivirus and repeat this step. If you still don't see a security warning, then consider replacing your antivirus program with a better one, preferably Kaspersky.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 29 April

- Transfer huge video files in seconds
- Try Microsoft's new Spartan browser
- Add music and videos to your documents
- Make free mobile phone calls forever

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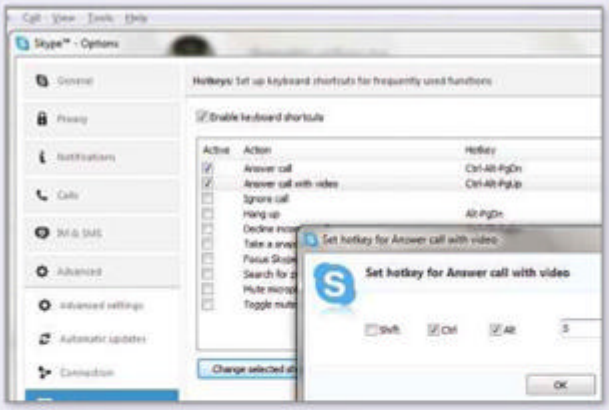
TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Make your Skype font bigger and set hotkeys for calls

My son is spending a year travelling across India and Australia and we use Skype to keep in touch via video calls (when his bandwidth permits it). One niggle I have is with the size of the fonts on Skype, which are too small for my liking. I decided to delve into Skype's settings in an effort to make the font larger. While doing this, I also found a way to set keyboard shortcuts for certain actions within Skype (such as answering calls).

Skype usually updates itself automatically when you log in, but to make sure you have the latest version, click Help at the top, then 'Check for Updates' and follow the instructions. To change the font type, style and size, click Tools at the top, then Options. Next, click IM & SMS at the bottom left, 'IM appearance', then 'Change font'. Choose a font, font style (regular, bold or italics) and size, click OK, then Save. All your Skype conversations will instantly change to reflect your new font.



To change keyboard shortcuts for Skype actions, click Tools, Options, Advanced at the bottom left, then click Hotkeys. Now tick 'Enable hotkey shortcuts'. You'll see pre-set hotkeys for actions such as answering a call with voice and video. Tick the action key you want to use, then double-click it. Next, tick the modifier keys (Shift, Ctrl or Alt) you want to use in conjunction, type any other key in the field beside that (see screenshot above), click OK, then Save.

Laura Finn

The winner of every Tip of the Fortnight wins this exclusive Computeractive mug!

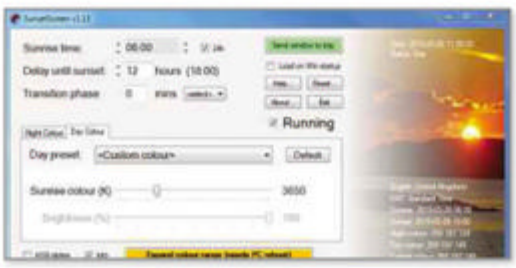
SCREEN BRIGHTNESS

Reduce eye strain when using your PC at night

I used to avoid using my PC late in the evening because, even with the lights turned on and the PC's brightness set to a low level, the glare of the screen was often too much for my eyes, resulting in headaches and trouble sleeping.

A friend recommended a free program called SunsetScreen, which gradually lowers the glare of your PC screen throughout the evening. Go to www.snipca.com/15916 (where you can read the science behind how the program works), then click Download SunsetScreen at the top right. Click the setup file and follow the steps to install it.

When it loads, enter the time of sunrise where you are (find this out online) at the top left. The program will now dim (or brighten) your PC's screen depending on the time of day. As it gets darker outside, your PC will take on a slight orange tint, making it less of a strain on your eyes.



If you want to modify its settings manually, then click the Night/Day Colour tabs and move the Sunset/Sunrise colour (K) slider, or click the 'Day/Night preset' dropdown menu and choose one of the options (see screenshot below left). Now, I can use my PC late into the evening and still have a good night's sleep.

Brendan Perry

FILE CONVERSION

Save web articles as PDFs

Thanks for your helpful Workshop on Cloud Convert (see 'Convert any file without software', Issue 444). The website really does live up to its boast to 'Convert anything to anything'.

Another feature I discovered while using it was the ability to save web pages as PDFs. This is great if you enjoy reading web articles offline (as I do). I can even sync them to my cloud-storage account and read them on my tablet. And, because the quality is so good, I sometimes even print these PDFs to read when I'm on the train to visit my daughter.

Go to www.cloudconvert.com, click the 'Select files' dropdown menu on the left, select 'Add from URL', paste the URL you want to convert, then click Add. Now click the 'select format' dropdown menu, move your cursor to 'document', select 'pdf', then click the red Start Conversion button. After it's finished, click the green Download button to download your file.

Philip Dean

MOVIE STREAMING

See every Netflix title at a glance in Chrome

I love watching classic films on Netflix (www.netflix.com), but don't have the patience to click the navigation arrows to browse films in each movie category. My son showed me a new way to modify Netflix so that it displays a long scrolling list of thumbnails within each category, which is a great way to see all the available films and TV programmes at a glance.

To enable this in Chrome, you need to add the free bookmarklet called Netflix God Mode to your browser. Go to www.snipca.com/15917, then drag and drop the green Netflix God Mode icon on to Chrome's bookmark bar. Next, go to www.netflix.com, sign into your account, then click the Netflix God Mode option in your bookmarks bar.

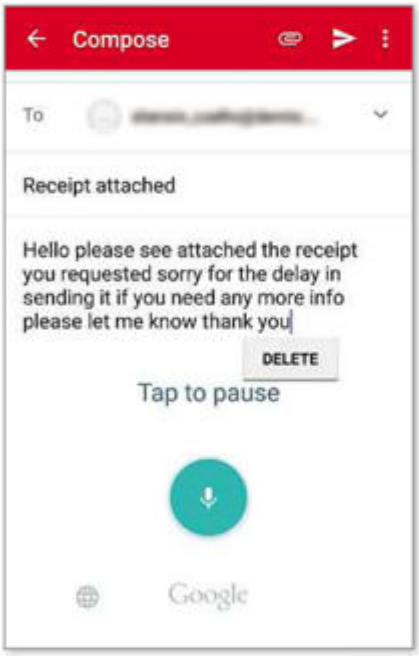
David Weatherall

Phone and Tablet Tips Brilliant things to do on your device

ANDROID

Dictate long emails and text messages

Sending long text messages or emails can be a bit of a chore, especially if your typing skills aren't up to much. But you can dictate messages and emails into Google and let it compose them for you. Tap the text message or email you want to reply to or start composing a new one, then tap the microphone icon on your onscreen keyboard. If you use SwiftKey Keyboard as your third-party keyboard, then long-press the comma icon.



A panel will open with a 'Speak now' option. Start dictating your message and it will automatically appear as text. For best results, speak slowly and ensure you're in a quiet place. When we tried it, Google correctly recognised every word we spoke (see screenshot below left).

When you've finished dictating, you may have to correct any misspelled words and punctuate your text.

ANDROID

Search for Wikipedia pages faster

The latest update to the free Wikipedia app (www.snipca.com/15977) automatically gives you a list of suggestions as you type in the search bar and remembers your previous searches.

Open the app and tap the search bar at the top to see a list of all your previous searches (most recent search terms appear first). Tap the Bin icon, then Yes, to delete any. Type your new search terms and you'll see a list of relevant Wikipedia entries, which you can tap to open.

ANDROID

Play the hidden Android Lollipop game

Google has a quirky habit of hiding certain features (known as 'Easter eggs') within its various products. One of the latest is a secret game, which can only be accessed on devices running the latest Android operating system (5.0) called Lollipop.

To check your device version, open your Settings, scroll to the bottom, then tap 'About phone/tablet/device', then check 'Android version'. Anything above 5.0 means you have Lollipop. Keep tapping 'Android version' until you see a small dot on your screen. Tap the dot to see a lollipop icon (which will change colour when tapped).

Tap and hold the Lollipop icon to begin playing the game, which requires you (represented by the Android logo) to navigate across a field of lollipops by tapping your screen. It's addictive, tough to master (we couldn't score more than 4 points) and is great fun if you have a bit of time to kill.

ANDROID & IOS

Use less of your data allowance while browsing in Chrome

Google has introduced a new Data Saver mode in the latest version of its Chrome mobile app (Android www.snipca.com/15978; iOS www.snipca.com/15980), which is particularly useful if you have limited data allowance. It works by compressing web pages before Chrome loads them, but the feature is switched off by default.

To turn it on in Android, open Chrome, tap the three dots at the top right, then Settings. Now tap the new Data Saver setting at the bottom of your screen, then tap the slider to turn it on.

Best New Apps

What you should install this fortnight

850 Sports News Digest
Free
Android: www.snipca.com/15982
iOS: www.snipca.com/15983

This app gets its name from the fact that you get a round-up of latest developments in your favourite sports (including relevant graphs and statistics) at exactly 8.50 every morning. By default, you'll see updates for all sports (including football, rugby and Formula 1), but you can narrow your selection within the My Sports section.

Enlight
£2.99
iOS: www.snipca.com/15984

This photo-editing app has more features than any similar app we've seen. Aside from options that let you crop, rotate and change brightness or saturation, you can add text, borders, filters and create a collage from your photos. It also lets you save the changes you make to one image, then apply them to others.

TomTom GO Mobile
Free
Android: www.snipca.com/15985

TomTom's latest app lets you navigate for 50 miles per month for free (paid-for options beyond that start at £14.99 a year). It includes all of TomTom's reliable features, including real-time traffic information and alerts for speed cameras.

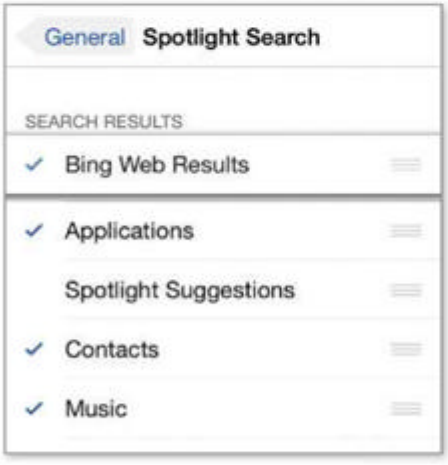
On an iOS device, tap the three dots at the top right, Settings, Bandwidth, Data Saver, then tap the slider to turn it on. From now on, you'll see a graph in this section that shows you how much data (as a percentage) you have saved using this mode.

iOS

Customise how you want Spotlight to work

Spotlight is the iOS feature that lets you search for items anywhere on your device when you tap a blank area of your home screen and swipe down. It lists your search results in categories, which appear in a specific order (Apps, Spotlight Suggestions, Contacts, Music, Podcasts and so on). Bing Web Results is the final option. However, it's easy to change the order in which these search categories appear.

So, for example, if you prefer web-search results to appear first, then tap Settings, General, then Spotlight Search to see all the search categories listed. Tap and hold the three horizontal lines next to the category you want to reposition (for example, Bing Web Results – see screenshot below), then drag it up the list. To exclude a category from Spotlight's searches, tap it to untick it.

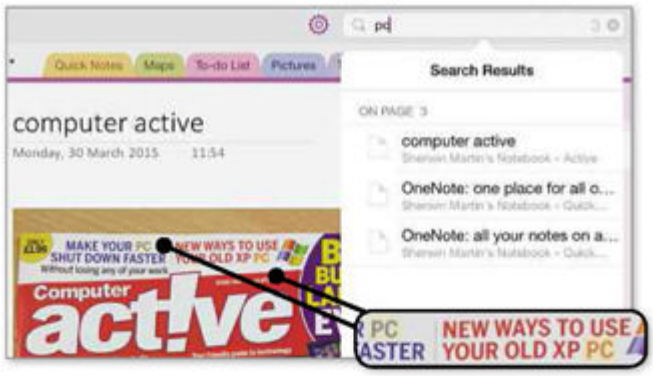


iOS

Find specific text within images using OneNote

The latest update to the free Microsoft OneNote for iPad app (www.snipca.com/15981) lets you search for text within an image, such as a photo of a page or magazine cover. This feature is already available in the PC version of OneNote and it works using OCR. We'll show you how to use this using a photo of last issue's *Computeractive* cover, then searching for the term 'pc'.

Open the app, tap the '+' symbol at the top right to create a new section, then name it. Tap above the date and time (at the top left) to name your page within that section, then tap the main body of the section. Next, tap the Insert tab at the top, then Camera, point your iPad at the page/cover containing text and tap the shutter icon to take a picture. Finally, tap the tick icon at the bottom right to add this image to your page. You can now search for any text within that image by typing in the search bar at the top right then tapping the relevant page. All instances of that text in your image will be highlighted (see screenshot).



Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

Elmo Loves ABCs for iPad

£3.99 www.snipca.com/15986 (iOS)

Teach your kids to write and identify letters with this educational app, which features *Sesame Street* characters. After they correctly trace letters of the alphabet on screen with their finger, they'll see videos about objects that begin with that letter. You can keep track of your child's progress.

AGES 6-10

Little Things Forever

Free www.snipca.com/15987 (Android)
£2.29 www.snipca.com/15988 (iOS)

This entertaining puzzle consists of a mosaic made up of many tiny, different objects. Children need to find all the objects listed at the top right by zooming into the mosaic and using the hints. As they improve, they need to complete mosaic puzzles by rotating and repositioning tiles.

AGES 11-16

Heads Up!

Free www.snipca.com/15989 (Android)
79p www.snipca.com/15990 (iOS)

This is a fun game for all the family. One person chooses a category (these include actors, movies and sea creatures), then places the device on their forehead, so the others can see the specific term (but the person can't). The others shout out clues about the term and the person needs to identify as many as possible in a minute.

WINDOWS 8, 10

Bypass your login screen

If you use a Desktop PC running Windows 8 or 10, you have to log in using your Microsoft (Hotmail or Outlook) account. This lets you sync all your settings and apps across multiple PCs and Windows devices, and makes setup easier when you buy a new PC.

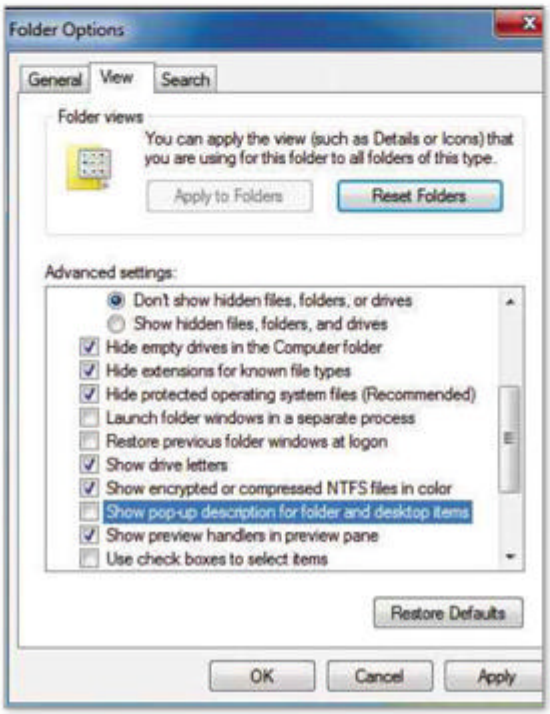
While this works well if you're the only one using that Windows PC, it's not ideal if you share your computer with other family members because it means you'll need to log them in every time. There's an easy way to bypass your login screen entirely, if you're happy to share your PC with others.

To do this, right-click the Start button to access the Quick Access Menu, then click Run. In the Run box, type netplwiz, then press Enter. Now untick the 'Users must enter a username and password to use this computer' box, then click Apply. You'll now need to enter and confirm your password, then click OK twice.

WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Disable irritating tip boxes

By default, whenever you move your cursor over an item – on your Desktop or within File/Windows Explorer – you'll see a small pop-up describing what the item is and what it does. For example, point to a file and you'll see its name, type, size and when you last opened it. Point to a setting and you'll see a small summary of what it does. These pop-ups are called tooltips and there's an easy way to disable them if you find them distracting.



Open Control Panel, click 'Appearance and Personalization', then Folder Options (File-Explorer Options in Windows 10) at the bottom. Next, click the View tab, then untick 'Show popup description for folder and desktop items' (see screenshot left), click Apply, then OK. To re-enable this option, repeat the steps and tick the box.

WINDOWS VISTA, 7, 8, 10

Make your mouse easier to use

There are a number of ways you can customise how your mouse works if you find it awkward to use for any reason. For example, you can swap the functions of the left and right buttons, change how fast or slowly a double-click registers, and even change how you drag and drop items.

Open Control Panel, click 'Hardware and Sound', then click Mouse (in the 'Devices and Printers' section) to open the Mouse Properties window. Click Apply and OK after each change you make to activate it.

To use the right button on your mouse to select and open items (instead of the default left button), tick the 'Switch primary and secondary buttons' box at the top.

The 'Double-click speed' section lets you control how quickly successive clicks need to be made to register a double-click. To find your ideal speed, double-click the small folder on the right. If it doesn't open, move the slider toward the Slow end and try again.

The third section, ClickLock, is useful if you find the whole process of dragging and dropping items a bit of a, well, drag (the action can be can be a strain for those with arthritis or RSI). Ticking 'Turn on ClickLock' lets you select an item, then long-press it (you'll now see a small square below your cursor). Now move your cursor to where you want to move that item, then click your mouse.

WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Change your Microsoft account picture

Your account picture appears on your lock screen and Start menu. By default, this is the profile picture you've chosen for your Microsoft (Hotmail or Outlook) account. There's an easy way to change the picture that displays on your PC, though the method varies slightly depending on the version of Windows.

In Windows 7, open the Start menu, click your profile picture at the top right, then click 'Change your picture'. You can choose from a list of graphical icons or click 'Browse for more pictures' at the bottom, navigate to the photo on your PC that you want to use, click Open, then Change Picture.

In Windows 8.1, click your account name at the top right of the Modern tile interface, then click 'Change account picture'. Now click Browse and add a picture from your PC or click Camera to take a photo using your PC's front camera. In Windows 10, open the Start menu, click your account name at the top left, then click 'Change account settings'. Now follow the steps we outlined for Windows 8.1.

Make Office Better

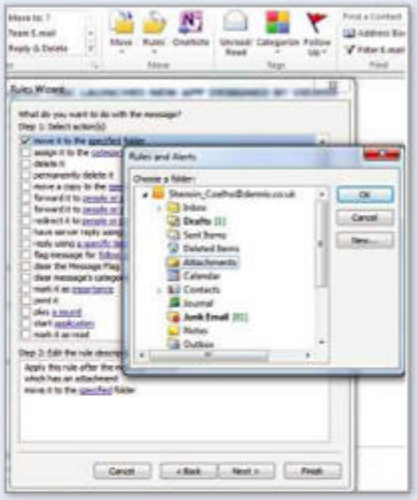
Expert tips for every program

OUTLOOK

Create a separate folder for emails with attachments

There's a fairly straightforward way to create a dedicated folder for emails with attachments. You can then quickly move all your emails with attachments to it and set up Outlook so that all future emails with attachments go directly to that folder.

Click the Folder tab at the top, then New Folder at the top left. Name it Attachments (or similar), select your email account at the top, then click OK. The folder will now be added to your list of email folders in the left-hand panel (along with Inbox, Drafts, Sent Items and so on).



Now click any email containing an attachment in your inbox. Click the Home tab, then the Rules dropdown menu (in the Move section). Next, click Create Rule, then Advanced Options at the bottom right. You'll see a list of different email rules you can tick. Tick the 'which has an attachment' rule, then click Next.

Now tick 'move it to the specified folder', then click the 'specified' link in the box below, select the Attachments folder you created (see screenshot right), click OK, then click Next twice. Now give this rule a name (such as Attachments Rule), tick both the boxes below – 'Run this rule now on messages already in 'Inbox'' and 'Turn on this rule', then click Finish.

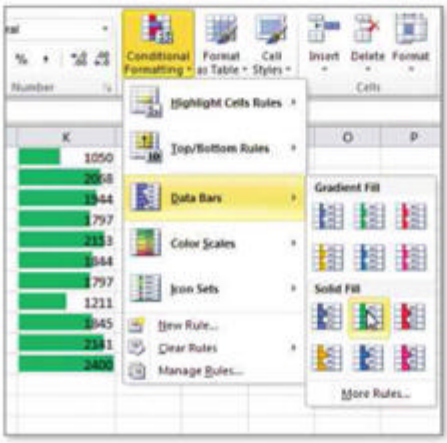
Now all your current emails that contain attachments will move from your inbox to your Attachments folder, and any new emails you receive that contain attachments will automatically appear within this folder.

EXCEL

Represent your values with coloured bars

It can be difficult to present a useful visual comparison of numerical data without resorting to filters in some way, and thereby changing its format. The best way of doing this without disrupting your data is to use Data Bars in Excel's powerful Conditional Formatting option.

This lets you represent each value as a bar within its cell. In the cell with the highest value, the bar will fill 100 per cent of the cell (see the 2400 green bar at the bottom of the screenshot below). All other (lesser) values will be represented by bars whose length is based on how they compare to the highest-value bar.



To do this, highlight the values you want to represent as data bars. Next, click the Conditional Formatting dropdown menu (in the Styles section of the Home tab), then move your cursor to Data Bars. You'll see two sections: Gradient Fill and Solid Fill, with a choice of colours. The first adds a colour spectrum to the bar, while the second adds a uniform colour. Move your cursor to one of the options to preview how your cells will look, then click the one you want.

If you want to remove this formatting later, simply highlight the formatted cells, click the Conditional Formatting dropdown menu, move your cursor to Clear Rules and click 'Clear Rules from Selected Cells'.

OFFICE

Access earlier versions of your file

Did you know that Windows saves copies of all older versions of your Office files and documents? This lets you, for the sake of comparison, open an older version of a document alongside the current one, and even lets you restore your current file to one of its previous versions.

These versions are automatically created by Office whenever you update a file or when Windows creates restore points of your PC, for example.

To see older versions of any Word, Excel or PowerPoint file, right-click the file's icon, then click Properties. Now click the Previous Versions tab to see all older versions listed in categories (based on when they were last modified – Yesterday, 'Earlier this week', and so on). Click any previous version, then Open or Restore (depending on what you want to do).

WORD

Quickly save all images in a document to your PC

You may have been sent a Word document with a number of images within it and would like to save them to your PC. There are a number of ways you can do this. The most common is to right-click each image, click 'Save as Picture', name the image then save it. But this can take ages if there are a lot of images.

Instead, to save all the images in one go, open the document, click File at the top left, then Save As. Now select where you want to save the file on your PC and name it. Next, click the 'Save as type' dropdown menu, select Web Page, then click Save. This will create a new folder called 'Doc_files' (where 'Doc' is the name you chose) in the location you specified containing all the images in their original format.

Pixlr.com

Blend images, resize them and get tons of free extras for this great online photo editor

Download Pixlr to your PC

Pixlr.com hosts a number of online image-editing tools that you can use within your web browser for free – Pixlr Express (apps.pixlr.com/express) is ideal for quick fixes, Pixlr Editor (apps.pixlr.com/editor) is a more serious Photoshop-like image editor, and Pixlr-o-matic (apps.pixlr.com/o-matic) is a fun tool for adding filters and effects.

But did you know you can also download Pixlr to your PC and use it offline, too? Go to http://pixlr.com and click Desktop, then Download. You'll need to set up a Pixlr account to download the program, but this is free (and unlocks some great additional features – see the next tip). Double-click the downloaded file and follow the steps to install.

A Desktop version of Pixlr-o-matic is also available as a separate download (www.snipca.com/16030). You'll need Adobe Air to run this, but you'll be prompted to install it if you don't already have it. Chrome users can install a free Pixlr Touch Up app from www.snipca.com/16021, and you can also get free Pixlr mobile apps for Android (www.snipca.com/16032) and iOS (www.snipca.com/16031).

Sign in and get more features for free

Subscribing to Pixlr's Pro membership unlocks advanced features for the Desktop and mobile versions, including enhanced colour channels. But you don't have to pay the (£1.35) monthly fee to get more from Pixlr. Sign into the Desktop program with the free account (known as Essentials membership) you set up when you downloaded it and you'll unlock lots of great extras, including new effects packs and creative tools – all for free.

Click Membership, then Sign-in and enter your details. You'll see some of the tools on the left are now adorned with pink ribbons, denoting free 'gifts' for account holders. For example, Pixlr has just released a great new Mermaid filter pack, which adds sparkling effects (known as 'bokeh') to your images.

Sign into the Desktop version of Pixlr to get loads of free tools (marked with pink ribbons)

Cut out objects without hassle

If you're cutting out an object from one image to paste into another – for a collage, say – you can use Pixlr Editor's lasso tool to select it. But if you don't want the hassle of precisely tracing around the edges of an object, you could use this simple trick, which also creates a pleasing blending effect for your collage.

Go to apps.pixlr.com/editor and open two images – one with the object to cut out and one for your background. Click the first image, then the lasso icon in the Tools palette. In the toolbar, make sure the Freehand Lasso is selected, then click the dropdown menu next to Feather and drag the slider to around the 28 mark. Ensure the Anti-alias box is ticked, then draw a rough outline around the outer edge of your object. Click Edit, then Copy.

Now switch to your background image, then click Edit and Paste. Your cut-out object will appear with an attractive fade-out border around the edges. You can experiment with the Feather levels and how you draw the outline – tracing just inside the edges of your object, for example, can have a pleasing effect too.

Resize objects without distorting them

Have you ever resized an image only to find that it looks squashed or stretched? If so, there's a simple trick that can prevent this. Let's say you've added an object to a background image in Pixlr Editor (see above). You can resize it by clicking Edit, then 'Free transform'. A selection box will appear around the object. Instead of clicking and dragging to change the object's dimensions, however, hold down the Shift key, then click one of the corner anchor points and drag inward to shrink or outward to enlarge. Doing so will resize your picture without affecting its relative dimensions. This essential resizing trick works in many other programs too, including Word.

Banish adverts from Pixlr.com

Pixlr's free web apps are great, but if there's one slight irritation it's the fact that Pixlr Editor, Pixlr-o-matic and Pixlr Express all feature large adverts prominently on the right-hand side of their respective interfaces.

Use Adblock Plus to replace distracting adverts with a white space

That's because Pixlr's free online tools are ad-supported. Currently, there's no way to turn them off, even if you've paid for a Pro membership. There's one simple solution, though – using a basic ad-blocker extension for your web browser you can eradicate the adverts altogether.

In the screenshot left, we've used Adblock Plus for Chrome (www.snipca.com/16027), but most other ad-blockers will work too. Annoyingly, you still won't get a full-screen editing experience (there'll be a large block of white space where the advert was), but at least it's much less off-putting.

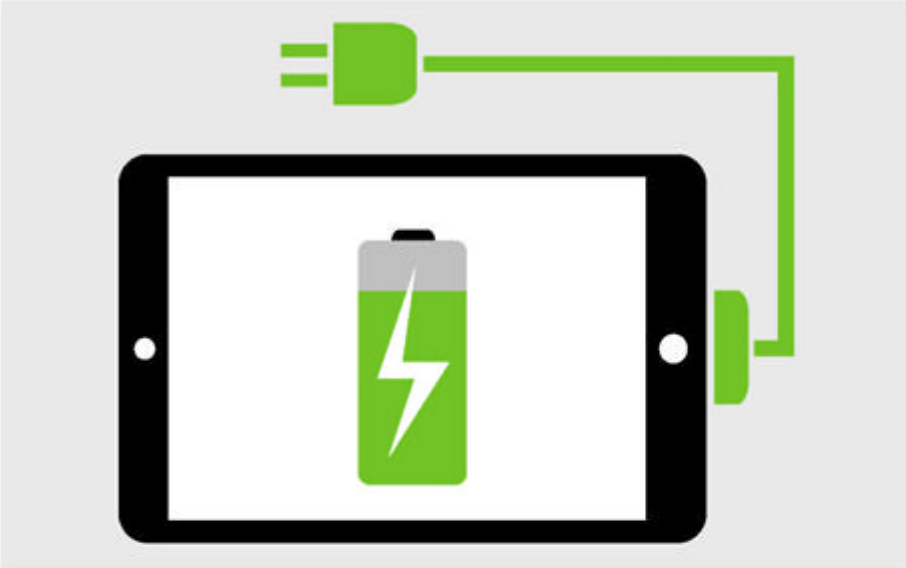
Next issue Secret Tips For... Firefox

Solid-state batteries

The 'holy grail' of batteries could lead to thinner devices that last much, much longer when charged

What are they?

A new type of rechargeable battery that lasts twice as long as traditional lithium-ion batteries, currently found in most phones, tablets and laptops. Any device powered by a solid-state battery will last much longer between charges. They're cheaper to make and are thinner too, which should lead to lighter devices.



Are they similar to solid-state drives?

Yes, in the sense that neither have any moving parts. As we explained in Issue 443, solid-state drives use flash memory to store and read data, unlike traditional hard drives which use spinning platters and needle-like heads. Solid-state batteries are similarly revolutionary because they use solid lithium electrodes, rather than the liquid mix of chemicals found in current batteries, which store current and release it when needed. This makes solid-state batteries safer, and capable of holding more power in a smaller space. And because they don't contain liquid, they can be made into any shape, meaning they could power a wide range of devices, not just phones and tablets.

Solid-state technology has been around longer than you think. The first such device was the cat's-whisker detector (www.snipca.com/15871), invented in 1906 and used in early 20th-century radios.

What's wrong with lithium-ion batteries?

What's right with them, you mean. They contain flammable liquid electrolyte, which can cause products to overheat. This happened to millions of Sony VAIO laptops in 2006 and 2008, forcing the company to recall them from sale. It has even been suggested that an explosion of onboard lithium-ion batteries led to the disappearance of flight MH370 last year.

They are also bulky, are prone to leaking, and have barely improved since Sony introduced them in 1991. Advances in battery technology haven't kept pace with the progress of computing, severely limiting the power of devices.

Sir James Dyson has invested £15m in a company that makes solid-state batteries

Why are they making news now?

Because Sir James Dyson, inventor of the bagless vacuum cleaner, has invested £15m in a company that makes them - the Michigan-based Sakti3 (http://sakti3.com). Dyson thinks they will prove as important an innovation as his company's vacuum cleaners. Mark Taylor, the company's head of research and development, says that they "are a bit of a holy grail", and has called Sakti3's technology "world-beating". Ann Marie Sastry, who founded Sakti3 in 2007, said that Dyson's money will help her company bring the batteries to market.

Which products will have solid-state batteries first?

Dyson's investment means its products will be the first to be powered by solid-state batteries, probably in new versions of its cordless vacuum cleaners, replacing the lithium-ion batteries that currently power them. But Taylor admits the technology is "a few years" away from appearing in any of the company's products. Eventually experts expect solid-state batteries to power anything that needs charging.

What else could they be used for?

Car companies such as General Motors, which has also invested in Sakti3, are excited because solid-state batteries could allow electric cars to be driven over 600 miles between charges, enough to go from London to Aberdeen. At the moment they can only manage 300 miles, and recharging takes over an hour. At the current rate of progress, it's clear that the benefits of solid-state batteries will stretch beyond vacuum cleaners.

RECORD CLASSIC TV & FILM FROM THE WEB

Jane Hoskyn shows you where to find your old favourites online and how to save them for watching in comfort

Remember the first time you set the video to record a TV programme? VHS felt revolutionary (and a bit naughty) because it let you watch your favourite programmes when you wanted to, instead of when Auntie Beeb or ITV wanted you to. You no longer had to choose between going out or watching *Doctor Who*. Even better (or naughtier), you could watch it over and over again at your leisure.

Then the internet came along, with its streaming video services like YouTube and the BBC's iPlayer, and you could watch what you wanted, when you wanted, where you wanted. You could search for an old favourite on YouTube and there it was, as clear (well, as fuzzy) as it was in the corner of your parents' living room all those years ago.

KEY POINTS

- Record streaming video to watch when you want
- Download YouTube videos safely using software you've already got
- Find TV clips and entire series you haven't seen for decades
- Discover the web's hidden vintage video gems

Keep lost treasures

There's a sizeable snag to internet video – it doesn't belong to you. Whoever uploaded the video can remove it as well. Content on broadcasters' sites, like iPlayer and the excellent TCM site (Turner Classic Movies, www.tcm.com), is available for a limited time period, usually between one and three months.

Then there's the buffering problem. Unless your broadband is particularly smooth and fast, streaming video is a stop-and-start affair. The iPlayer's built-in downloads tool lets you save shows to watch offline, but only for 30 days. After that, the file self-destructs. So Auntie Beeb is still telling you what you can and can't do, even though you pay her upwards of £145 a year for your licence.

Here, we'll show you how to save your long-lost favourite TV shows and films for as long as you want. We'll reveal which video-downloading tools actually work, and explain how to record video as it plays on your screen. We'll also outline the legal rights and wrongs of capturing online broadcasts.

Once that's out of the way, we can move on to the fun stuff. We'll take you on a journey through the internet's video vaults, showing you where and how to find lost classics before picking out our favourite hidden gems.

RECORD TV SHOWS AND FILMS FROM THE WEB

Record online video for free

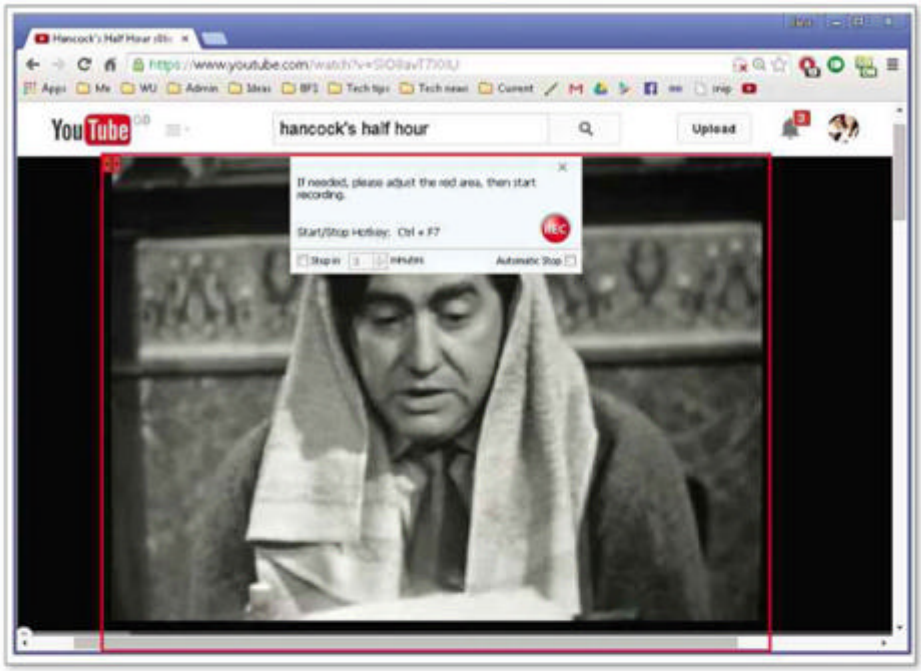
Screen-recording is the direct digital descendant of VHS. You simply record what's playing or broadcasting on your PC's screen, then save it as a video file to watch when you want.

The very best tool for the job, Camtasia (www.snipca.com/15918), costs more than your first video recorder (£236.45 inc VAT, to be precise). You can buy a new iPad Mini 2 for less (www.snipca.com/15926). Fortunately, Camtasia has a more affordable little sister, Snagit (www.snipca.com/15919, £39.50; free 15-day trial). If you become very keen on screen-recording and want excellent results, Snagit won't disappoint.

There are free alternatives, but most force you to compromise on recording time. Jing (www.snipca.com/15921) records great-quality video, but only up to five minutes in length. Screenr (www.screenr.com) also lets you record up to five minutes and works entirely in your browser, without the need to download anything.

To record without time restrictions, use the free program Any Video Recorder (AVR, www.any-video-recorder.com). You can use it to record anything that moves, as long as it's on your PC's screen: YouTube videos, iPlayer broadcasts, Netflix shows and any TV or film gems you find.

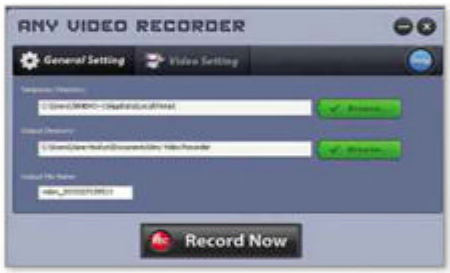
AVR lets you select an area of your screen to record (useful if you want to carry on working in a different window), then automatically saves the recording to your hard drive as a good-quality MP4 video file.



Frame a video on your screen then click Rec to capture it using Any Video Recorder

AVR's website has a strong hint of "too good to be true" and we braced ourselves for a truckload of adware in the installer, but there were no extras to opt out of at all. The installer correctly predicted that we'd see a Windows Security warning and assured us it was safe, so we clicked 'Install this driver software anyway' and didn't encounter any problems.

When the program opens, give it a test run by clicking the Record Now button. Your Desktop may disappear for a moment, which is a bit scary, but it will come back. Click Manual in the little blue window that appears. There's an automatic option that tries to detect any video playing on your screen, but it doesn't seem to work – at least not reliably.



Any Video Recorder is the easiest tool for recording video as it plays on your Desktop

After a couple of moments a red square will appear on your screen. Drag it to fit round the video you want to record, input a time limit if you want, then click the Rec button. You can also start and stop recording by pressing Ctrl+F7. When you press Stop, AVR processes and saves the MP4 to your chosen folder, which opens automatically in Windows (File) Explorer. Click it to play it in your default video player, or copy it to your tablet or laptop to watch while out and about.

If you want to crop or trim your recording, we recommend the excellent free online video editor WeVideo (https://www.wevideo.com). You can also convert ▶

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T USE CAMSTUDIO

The best-known free Camtasia alternative, CamStudio, is worse than useless. In Issue 443's Cover Feature, we revealed that this screen-recording tool installs adware on your PC, with no chance to opt out. Software listings site Alternative To (http://alternativeto.net) has now removed CamStudio from its database and flagged it as malware, citing a damning safety report from VirusTotal (www.virustotal.com, see screenshot).

CamStudio is not a lone offender. Online video recording is a security minefield. Video software is expensive to make, so free programs are often funded by bundled adware, and extensions are easy for hackers to embed with malware.

If you find a new, free video-recording tool that you're determined to try, upload its installer (usually an EXE file) to VirusTotal before you attempt to run it. VirusTotal will tell you if any antivirus has flagged the file as malware. Make sure your antivirus software is updated and enabled, and have the latest version of AdwCleaner (www.snipca.com/15925) saved to your Desktop to remove any nasties that do sneak into your system.

your MP4s and other video files to alternative formats using WeVideo.

Download YouTube videos safely using VLC

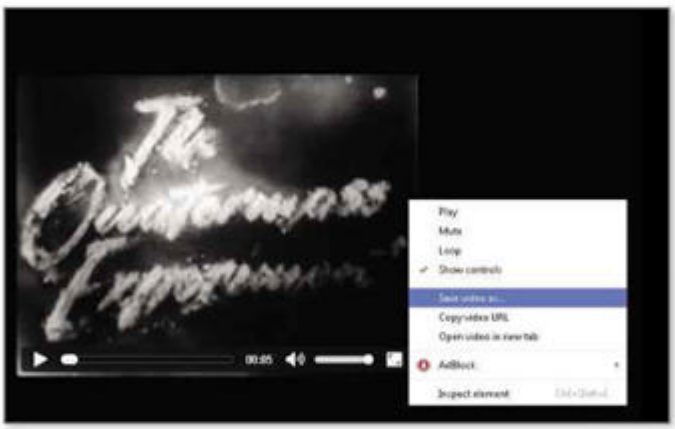
The best place to find classic clips and shows is YouTube, the web's biggest video site (in fact it's the third-most visited site of all, behind Google and Facebook). But YouTube is designed for watching videos online, not for saving them to watch offline, and its owner Google cracks down hard on attempts to get around this. That's why most of the "YouTube downloader" extensions you'll find online don't work, and many are unsafe.

Fortunately, there's no need to use them. You can either record YouTube videos as they play using Any Video Recorder, or you can download them using a hidden tool in our favourite media player, VLC (www.snipca.com/15928, see Best Free Software, Issue 446).

Downloading is more hit and miss than screen-recording, and in our experience it doesn't work with all online videos. But it does work with most YouTube videos, and it frees you from the need to play a video while you capture it.

Use a hidden feature in VLC to safely download YouTube videos

First, go to YouTube and find a video you want to save, then copy its URL to your clipboard. Open VLC and click Media, then Open Network Stream. Paste the URL into the box and click Play. Your YouTube video will now start playing in VLC.



Open a video in YouTube's own server, then right-click to download it

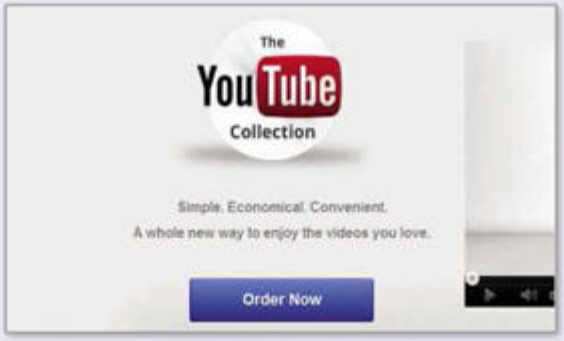
That's impressive enough, but here's where it really gets clever. Click Tools, then Codec Information (see screenshot above) and, in the box that opens, right-click the long line of text in the Location box at the bottom and choose Select All. Press Ctrl+C to copy the text, then paste it into your browser's address bar. When you press Enter, the video will open in YouTube's server. Right-click the video as it plays and select 'Save Video as' (see screenshot left), then choose a location on your hard drive to download the file to.

Type a name (say, quatermass) into the 'File name' box (where it says 'videoplayback' by default), followed by .mp4 (so in our example, the whole thing would read 'quatermass.mp4'). If you don't include the file extension as well, the exported file will not work. Press Save, and the file will download. Click to play it in your default video player.

GET YOUTUBE CLASSICS ON LASERDISC*

*Sadly not. This was one of YouTube's better April Fool's Day jokes. On 1 April 2012, the site's visitors were greeted with a little DVD icon next to the main YouTube logo, and if they clicked the icon, up popped a promotional video for a new (and entirely fictitious) service called The YouTube Collection. Lucky users of this service could order any YouTube video for home delivery on DVD, VHS, Betamax and even Laserdisc, then enjoy "the complete YouTube experience completely offline".

Sadly, the spoof never became reality, but we hope you can get a little closer to that "experience" using the tips and tools in this feature.

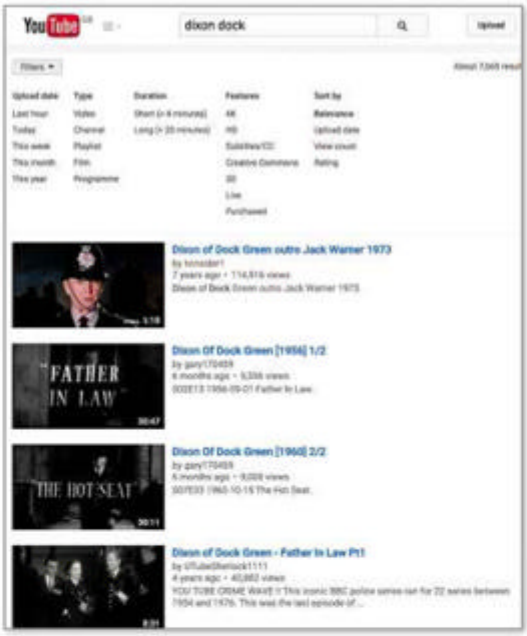


FIND THE WEB'S BEST CLASSIC TV SHOWS AND FILMS

Find classic shows in seconds on YouTube

Now we've dealt with the technical stuff, we can move on to the fun part: watching telly. YouTube is still the first place we turn to for video clips, and its search engine is as powerful as you'd expect from a site that's been owned by Google since 2006.

It's really good for finding clips and entire episodes of a programme when you can't quite remember the full name. For example, type dixon dock into the search box, and YouTube instantly offers a wealth of content from vintage police drama *Dixon of Dock Green*, including the first and second episodes in full, the opening credits, the closing credits and an audio track of the theme (and that's just the first page of results – see screenshot right).



YouTube and its search filters will even help you find TV shows whose full titles you can't remember

Narrow your search by clicking the Filters button at the top-left and clicking filters such as 'Subtitles/CC' (only see videos with closed-caption subtitles), 'Long (> 20 minutes)' (videos longer than 20 minutes; ideal for finding full episodes), and Programme (videos whose uploader has marked them as TV programmes).

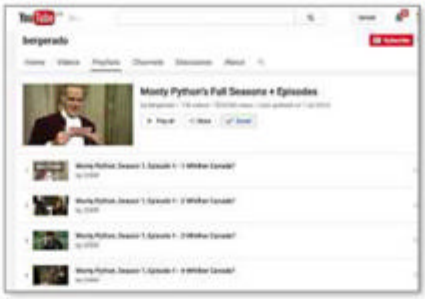
To find whole series or groups of clips, use the Playlist filter. Type your search term, click Filters, then Playlist. For example, our 'dixon dock' search found playlists containing several *Dixon of Dock Green* episodes; a 'crime drama' playlist containing 16 episodes of various series (www.snipca.com/15944), including the original *Dragnet* and *Z Cars*; and a playlist of TV shows starring PC George Dixon himself, actor Jack Warner (www.snipca.com/15945).

In most cases, you won't have to record or download a YouTube video to watch it again later. There's every chance it'll still be there in a week, a month or a year. You can save videos to a Watch List by clicking the little clock icon under the player. You can also save entire playlists by clicking the '+' symbol at the top right of the playlist player. Find your Watch Later list and saved playlists by clicking the three horizontal lines next to the YouTube logo whenever you're signed into your account.

However, YouTube videos can (and do) get taken off the site, either by YouTube or by the person who uploaded them. So if you record your favourites and save them to your hard drive, you'll know you can watch them whenever you want – and without the need for an internet connection.

What to record: 176 *Monty Python* sketches in one playlist (www.snipca.com/15922 – see screenshot above right). For more comedy gold, search for 'Hancock's Half Hour' to find plenty of TV and radio episodes from East Cheam's finest. Britain's greatest ever comedy duos – Morecambe and Wise and The Two Ronnies – also crop up a lot on YouTube, with Christmas specials in full and classic sketches ('Four candles', André Previn etc). You'll even find some of Morecambe and Wise's films from the 1960s, including the spy spoof *The Intelligence Men*.

Watch the first episode of *Steptoe and Son* on The Internet Archive, and download it for free



Watch hundreds of clips from a specific series or genre using YouTube's Playlist filter

Download vintage TV from The Internet Archive

In our Cover Feature in Issue 440 ('What you must Download in 2015'), we shared our love for The Internet Archive (https://archive.org), an incredible resource of TV shows, films, audio clips and even computer games that are old enough to be out of copyright. Because of their licence-free status, you don't have to use third-party tools to record them – you can simply download them straight from the Internet Archive website, all for free.

The site is US-based, so its Television section (www.snipca.com/15946) has a distinctly American flavour, with transatlantic treats including *The Three Stooges* and *You Bet Your Life*, the legendary quiz show presented by Groucho Marx. Click a video to view it, and click 'MPEG4' at the bottom right of the player to download it in MP4 format.

To focus on home-grown content, click the British tag in the right-hand list (or go straight here: www.snipca.com/15947) and browse the results. Here we found classic episodes of *Coronation Street* (www.snipca.com/15939), *The Avengers* (www.snipca.com/15949) and *Armchair Theatre* (www.snipca.com/15948), all with free download links below the player.

To continue browsing, click the tags (blue links) below the video-player window. The site isn't as well organised as YouTube, and the search tool is less powerful, but that actually makes it more fun to explore. Sometimes you uncover the best gems when you didn't know you were looking for them.

What to download: The first episode of perhaps the best sitcom of all time, *Steptoe and Son* (www.snipca.com/15938). There are also episodes from the chilling 1950s sci-fi classic *Quatermass and the Pit*.

▶

Computer active

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Collect classic *Doctor Who* episodes

As we mentioned, the BBC keeps a tight rein on its content. The corporation's golden goose, *Doctor Who*, is particularly well guarded, and you won't find any classic episodes on the iPlayer.

YouTube has plenty of *Doctor Who* clips (such as Jon Pertwee's regeneration into Tom Baker: www.snipca.com/15950), but full episodes tend to get quickly removed following copyright requests. The Internet Archive has free downloadable *Doctor Who* audio clips, comics and ebooks (www.snipca.com/15955), but no episodes.

What's a *Who* fan to do? Go to Hell's Library (www.snipca.com/15936). Here, you'll find a link to nearly every episode of the 'classic' (20th century) *Doctor Who*, most of them uploaded by fans – and plenty of non-*Doctor Who* content, too. Most links open automatically in Google Docs (https://docs.google.com), where you can play the video in your browser or click the Download arrow at the top of the window to save the file. The Hell's Library FAQ (www.snipca.com/15952) recommends saving files as MP4 and playing them in VLC for offline viewing.

The *Doctor Who* 'reboot' (21st century series) is all currently available on Netflix (www.snipca.com/15953, £5.99 a month) but the classic series is not. We found classic episodes on Amazon Instant Video (www.snipca.com/16004), but again they're not free. Most cost £1.89, with a series costing £5.99.

The best-quality source of classic *Doctor Who* episodes is US streaming site Hulu (www.snipca.com/15932). However, to use it, you'll have to pay a subscription ($7.99 a month, around £5.40) and pretend you have a US IP address by using the free Chrome extension Hola (www.snipca.com/15933). To find out more about beating internet restrictions by using Hola and other tools that disguise your location, see our Cover Feature in Issue 441.

Whatever geographical tricks you pull, you won't be able to download episodes from Netflix, Amazon or Hulu using any built-in tools. You pay to watch them online only. The only way to keep them is to use a screen recorder.

What to record: Watch and download the first *Doctor Who* episode, 'An Unearthly Child', from Hell's Library (www.snipca.com/15936). For just over a fiver, you can watch the whole classic 1973 series 'The Time Warrior', with Jon Pertwee, on Amazon (www.snipca.com/15954). And for a special treat, here are 707 *Doctor Who* episodes playing at the same time (www.snipca.com/15935).

Download classic *Doctor Who* episodes in Google Docs by clicking the arrow at the top

You can see all the original *Doctor Who* on Hulu, but you'll need a subscription and a proxy IP address

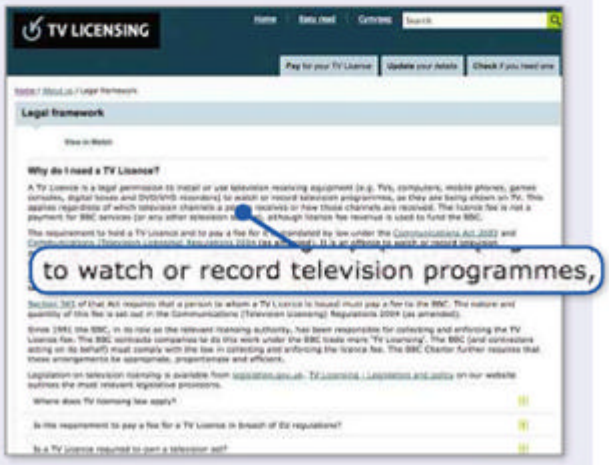
IS IT LEGAL TO RECORD ONLINE TV?

In short, yes – as long as you're recording it for your own private use. UK copyright law currently lets you make a copy of an online broadcast, as long as you do so in your own home to watch at a more convenient time. The same is true whether you're recording to VHS or a hard drive.

You need a valid TV Licence to record or watch shows as they're being shown on TV, regardless of what channel they're on, according to the TV Licensing website (www.snipca.com/15958). You don't currently need a licence to watch or record time-shifted content.

But while recording web video is within legal boundaries, sharing your recordings is not. Don't make copies for your friends or for YouTube, and don't even think about selling them – that's piracy. For more on content theft and its grey areas, see Fact UK (www.snipca.com/15959).

Be aware that a website's own terms and conditions may be more strict than the letter of the law, and some may prohibit recording or downloading of their video streams. Keep doing it (that is, keep being caught doing it), and you may find your account is deleted.



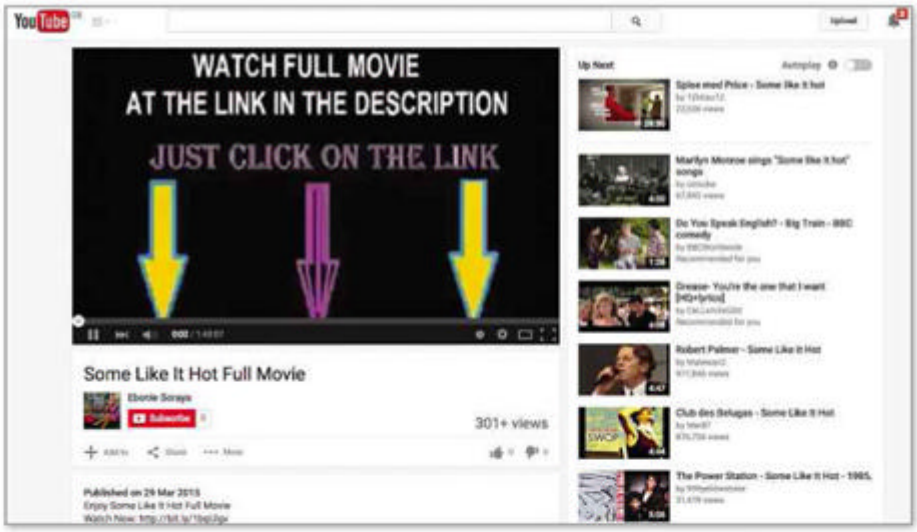
You must have a valid TV Licence to watch or record programmes as they're broadcast

Save classic films and find lost treasures

Unless you happen to have your very own cinema down the back of the garden, the best place to watch full-length films for free is Black And White Movies (www.bnwmovies.com). Click a thumbnail to choose a genre (such as Animation, War, Western or Classic), then click a film's thumbnail to watch it using the built-in player, which has a full-screen mode. Films rated highest by users are listed at the top, with the brilliant courtroom drama *12 Angry Men* (www.snipca.com/15968) leading the pack.

You can download films for free using Black And White Movies, but the process is trickier than with The Internet Archive. Click the little red download button a few lines below the player, then right-click one of the links (go for the one ending '.mp4' if available), click Save As and save the video file to your computer. Alternatively, use a screen recorder.

The Internet Archive has a smaller selection of films. Go to the site's Feature Films section (www.snipca.com/15960) for classics including the Cary Grant newspaper comedy *His Girl Friday* (www.snipca.com/15962) and more obscure gems such as *West of Hot Dog* (www.snipca.com/15963 – see screenshot below), a silent western that Stan Laurel made before he teamed up with Oliver Hardy.

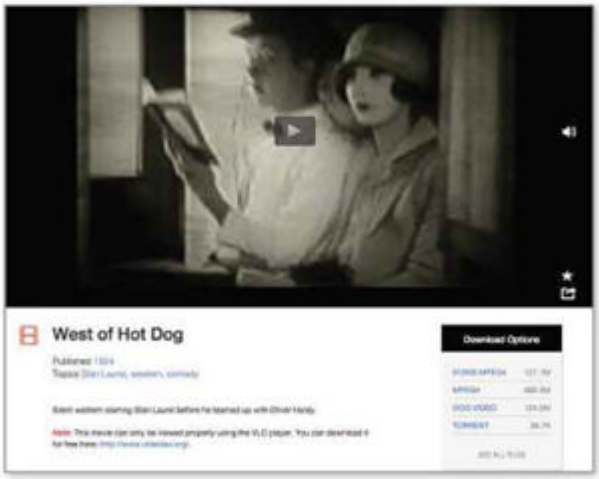


Some Like It Not: be aware that full-length films on YouTube are not always genuine

For more recent blockbusters like *The Godfather* you'll need a more conventional source such as TCM (www.tcm.com/watchtcm). The channel's website makes films available to view online for around a month after they've been shown on TV, so the selection is changing all the time. Streaming quality is superb.

YouTube has plenty of full-length films to watch for free. Tread carefully, though, because they're not always what they seem. When we searched YouTube for *Some Like It Hot* and clicked 'Some Like It Hot Full Movie' (complete with reassuring '1:40:07' timestamp), there was no video of the film – just a gaudy row of arrows and a link to a nameless "movie downloads" site (see screenshot above). There is plenty of good-quality film content on YouTube, but do be aware of these occasional scams.

Download classics like *12 Angry Men* for free from Black And White Movies



Find lost treasures like Stan Laurel's early silent film *West of Hot Dog* on The Internet Archive

An inescapable problem with recording and downloading films is they devour hard-drive space. Even a relatively short feature like Laurel and Hardy's *The Flying Deuces*, free to download from The Internet Archive (www.snipca.com/15961), is a 1.5GB file. So we'd recommend investing in an external hard drive and saving your recordings to that to avoid clogging up your PC.

What to watch: If you're in a serious mood, watch the stunning silent classic *Battleship Potemkin* (www.snipca.com/15964). If you're not, join Charlie Chaplin for *Twenty Minutes of Love* (www.snipca.com/15965). ca

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Things to do with an old XP PC

PART 2 Create a home entertainment centre

This issue, **Jonathan Parkyn** shows you how to convert your old XP PC into a music, video and photo player

Connect your PC to your TV

One great way to repurpose your PC is to turn it into an all-in-one media centre that's connected to your living-room TV. By far the easiest (and cheapest) way to connect the PC and TV is via HDMI cable. Modern TV sets come with multiple HDMI sockets and, if you're lucky enough to have a PC with an HDMI output, then all that's needed is a £3 HDMI cable, which will carry sound as well as picture. There are plenty on Amazon (www.snipca.com/15889).

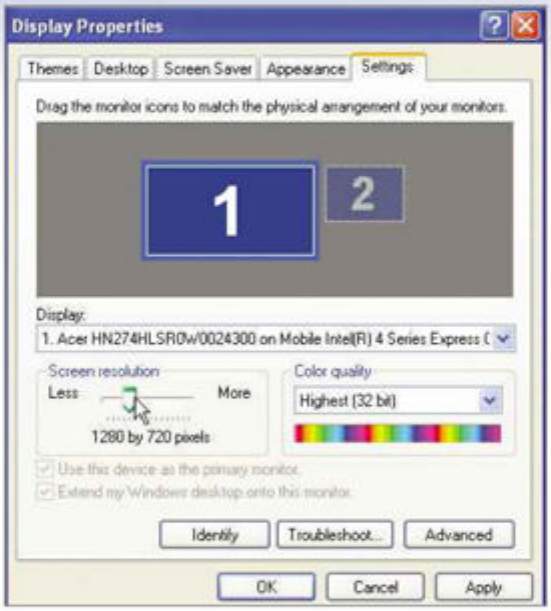
Annoyingly, Windows XP computers tend to pre-date HDMI, so it's more likely that your old PC uses either VGA or DVI (or both) for its video output. It's possible to buy a DVI-to-HDMI cable or adapter (www.snipca.com/15890), but DVI doesn't carry sound.

Some TVs offer a VGA connection (sometimes labelled 'RGB' or 'PC'), often with a separate socket for audio. If yours does, connect your PC's video output via a VGA cable, then use a male-to-male 3.5mm mini jack cable (like this: www.snipca.com/15891) to connect the speaker or headphone socket on your PC to the audio input your TV.

Another option is to get a converter box that lets you connect DVI and audio separately from your PC to a single HDMI socket on your TV, but they can be pricey (this one is £60: www.snipca.com/15876).

See your PC's screen on your TV

Once the connection is made, turn on your PC and switch your TV to the appropriate input. If the image appears distorted, you'll need to adjust the computer's resolution settings. Right-click the Desktop, select Properties, then click Settings and move the slider until the resolution suits your screen.



Set a suitable screen resolution for your TV

If your TV and PC aren't recognising each other, switch off your PC before making the connection, then try again. If that still doesn't work, you may need to connect your PC to its old monitor (or use the built-in screen on a laptop) and set a suitable resolution before reconnecting to the TV.

If you want to control your computer from your sofa, a keyboard and mouse won't be the most convenient option, especially if they're not wireless. Instead, get a remote control handset like this excellent infrared PC remote control (£3.59, www.snipca.com/15877; XP and Vista only).

Install free photo and video software

Windows Media Player (WMP) is fine for playing music, but to watch video you're better off with VLC (www.snipca.com/15892), which supports a huge range of video and audio file formats, plus DVDs, CDs and even VCDs (see Best Free Software, Issue 446).

VLC still works on XP, but you should download it using a Windows 7 or 8/8.1 PC (which is much safer for going online) then save the EXE installation file to a USB stick and transfer it to your old XP PC.

Similarly, XP's built-in photo viewer has always been a bit lacking, but Google's free photo tool Picasa (http://picasa.google.co.uk) still supports XP. Given the dangers of going online using XP, you won't be able to use Picasa's web features, but you can still use its Desktop tools to organise your photos and play slideshows.

Alternatively, install a media-centre program for playing your music, photos, movies and DVDs all from one place. Open-source program Kodi (http://kodi.tv) would be our choice if it still supported XP. Happily, you can get an XP-compatible version of Kodi's forerunner, XBMC, for free (www.snipca.com/15878). As with VLC, download it using another PC, then transfer and install it on your XP computer. ca

Never miss another **security update**

Security updates protect you from the latest malware and hacking attacks. **Jonathan Parkyn** explains how to be first in the queue for new fixes

Software updates are a pain, but they're a necessary evil. Besides allowing developers to fix bugs and add features, they plug ('patch') security holes.

As demonstrated by the recent Freak flaw (see News, Issue 445), fresh vulnerabilities are discovered all the time. To make sure you're protected from them, you need to get the latest software updates as soon as they're issued.

This is easier said than done. Microsoft hasn't helped matters by "evolving" its Advanced Notification Service (www.snipca.com/15893). Until January 2015, the service provided vital information about forthcoming fixes to all Windows users – but this is now sent to paying customers only. The good news is there are plenty of other ways to hear about the latest updates for your PC, tablet and phone as soon as they're released, and even get them installed automatically.

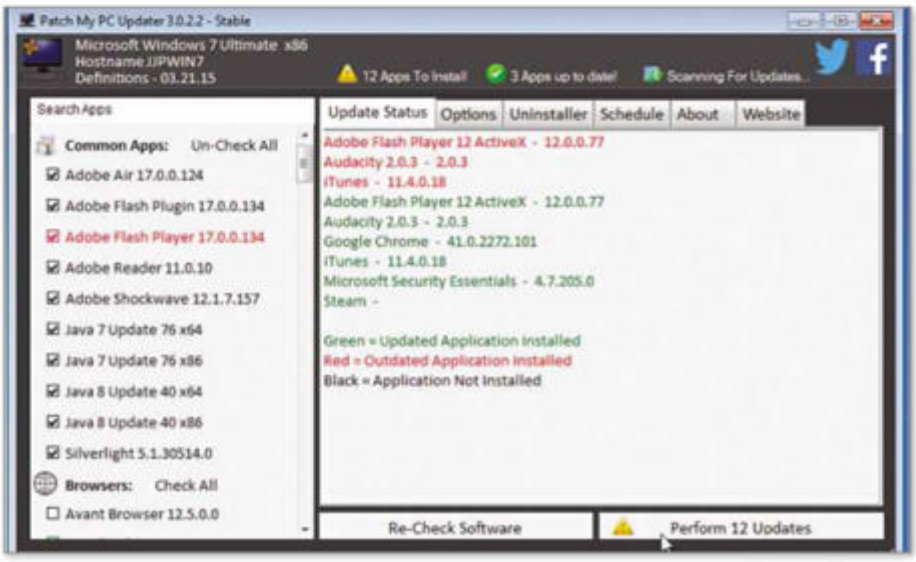
Scan your software for missing updates

Virtually all the programs installed on your PC – from your browser to your email program – are potentially vulnerable. Some programs include an option to check for updates automatically, which you can usually find in the Options, Preferences or About menu. For example, most modern web browsers apply security patches and other updates automatically.

But to make sure you're getting the latest updates for all your programs, install a dedicated update scanner. Patch My PC (www.snipca.com/15894) is a great free program that checks the software on your PC and alerts you to any out-of-date versions by flagging them in red text (see screenshot below left). Better still, you can install any updates that are available with a single click of the Perform Updates button.

Patch My PC doesn't cover all programs, but it will help you keep more than 100 of the most commonly exploited third-party programs and plug-ins on your PC updated safely, including Java, Flash, QuickTime and Adobe Reader.

We also recommend Secunia PSI (www.snipca.com/15885), which is free and can be set to install most program updates automatically, including several not covered by Patch My PC.

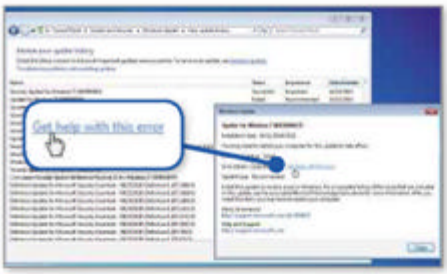


Use an update scanner like Patch My PC to check for out-of-date programs

Get Windows patches automatically

The Advanced Notification Service may be a thing of the past for most of us non-payers, but Microsoft hasn't stopped releasing software updates. It still issues updates ('security bulletins') for Windows on Patch Tuesday, which is usually the second Tuesday of every month, though sometimes it's the fourth Tuesday. Here's a list of the most recent security bulletins: www.snipca.com/15895 (note that Microsoft writes dates in that annoying American way, putting the month first – so '3/10/2015' means 10 March).

As long as your PC is set to download and install updates automatically, you'll get them without having to do anything.



Check for help using the Windows Update Troubleshooter

Sometimes you may need to restart your PC in order to complete the installation process, though, so look out for notifications and restart as soon as it's convenient.

To check you're receiving Windows updates automatically, open the Control Panel, click 'System and Security', Windows Update, then 'Change settings'. Make sure 'Install updates automatically (recommended)' is selected under 'Important updates' and that 'Give me recommended updates the same way I receive important updates' is ticked.

Unfortunately, Windows Update doesn't always work as it should, and some updates may not be installed automatically. To check whether anything has slipped through the net, go to Windows Update and click 'Check for updates', then install any that are listed as available. If an update still fails to install, or if you're experiencing any other trouble with Windows Update, use the free Windows Update Automated Troubleshooter (www.snipca.com/15884, click 'Run now' in the blue box).

You can also check for problems with specific updates. Go to Windows Update, click 'View update history' and then look for an update that's listed as Failed. Right-click it and select 'View details'. You should see an error code. Click 'Get help with this error' or type the code into Google to see if there's a fix.

Never miss another Office patch

Last year a massive vulnerability was discovered in Word that could potentially let hackers take control of your PC using remote code execution (www.snipca.com/15899).

Microsoft quickly released a patch, but unless you're running Office 365 the update may not have been installed. This is because other versions of Office (the ones most of us use) don't receive patches and updates automatically via Windows Update. To ensure you get Office patches as soon as they're released, tweak your Windows Update settings.

In Windows 8/8.1, press Win+C and click Settings, 'Change PC settings', 'Update and recovery', Windows Update and then 'Choose how updates get installed'. Make sure 'Give me updates for other Microsoft products when I update Windows' is ticked.

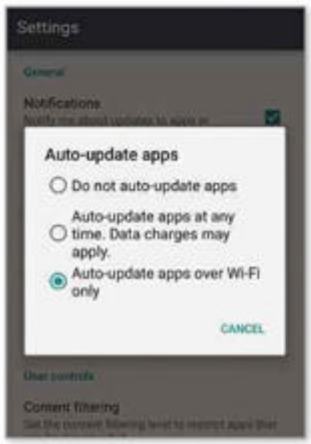
In Windows 7, open Windows Update. If you see a message saying 'Get updates for other Microsoft products', it means you're only receiving updates for your operating system (OS) and not for other Microsoft products like Office. Click 'Find out more' and follow the instructions. If this doesn't work (and we've noticed it doesn't always), try this workaround: install Microsoft's Silverlight plug-in (www.microsoft.com/silverlight) and, at the end of the procedure, tick 'Enable Microsoft Update (recommended)'.

Yoy can enable Microsoft Update by installing Silverlight

Check update settings for your phone or tablet

The recent Freak bug didn't just strike Windows – Android and iOS were affected too, with Microsoft, Google and Apple all racing to release fixes. There's currently no way of setting your device to install Android or iOS updates automatically, but we recommend installing updates as soon as you see an on-screen notification telling you there's one available.

To check for available updates on your Android tablet or phone, go to Settings and tap 'About phone' (or 'About tablet'), 'System updates', then 'Check for update'. In iOS, tap Settings, General and then Software Update.



Make sure your mobile apps are set to update – but only over Wi-Fi

It's also a good idea to set your phone and tablet apps to update automatically, on Wi-Fi only (otherwise you could end up with a hefty mobile-data bill). In Android, open the Google Play app and tap the menu (three lines), Settings, then 'Auto-update apps' and choose 'Auto-update apps over Wi-Fi only' (see screenshot left). In iOS, tap Settings, then 'iTunes & App Store' and make sure Updates is switched on under Automatic Downloads, but leave Use Mobile Data switched off. ca

TWITTER CAN BE USEFUL!

You may think of Twitter as the preserve of trolls and celebrities, but it does have its useful side as well – in fact it's the web's best source of breaking security news. Most big security companies and experts post news and comments on Twitter, and if you 'follow' them you can be first to know about the latest threats, patches, products and tips. Here are a few of our favourites:

@msftsecresponse

Latest security bulletins from Microsoft's Security Response team.

@symantec

Breaking security news from antivirus firm Symantec.

@gcluley

News, comments and tips from one of the web's most prolific security experts, Graham Cluley.

@e_kaspersky

Kaspersky is a person! Eugene Kaspersky, founder of the antivirus giant, posts interesting comments and links several times a day.

Be first to hear about threats and updates by following security firms on Twitter

Sort your messy **files and folders**

Your PC is full of folders, photos, documents and other clutter. **Barry Collins** reveals free tools and tricks for bringing order to the mess

Duplicate photos, empty documents, long-abandoned folders and other clutter quickly turn a clean hard drive into a digital dump.

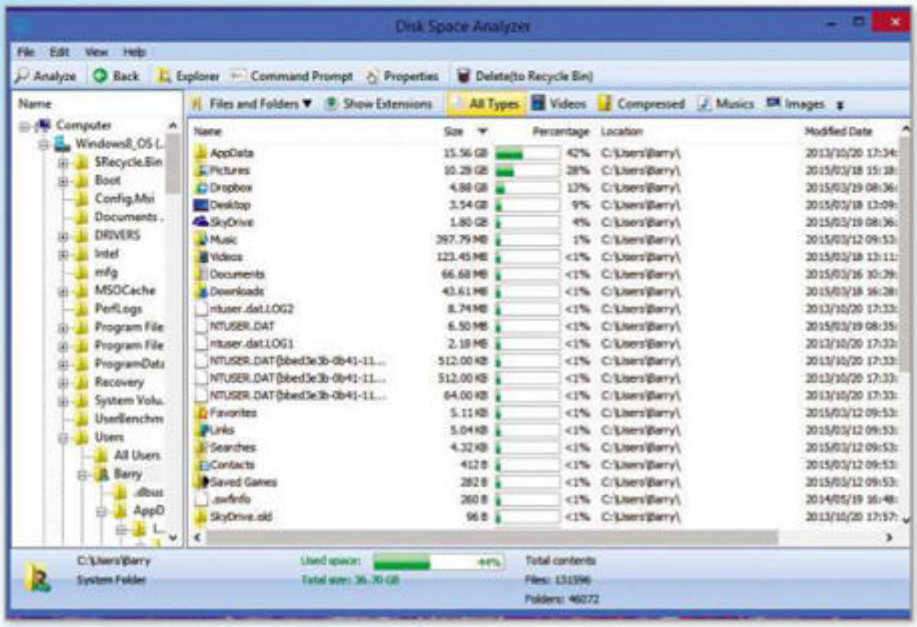
The space problem is especially pressing if you're using a modern PC or laptop with an SSD (solid-state drive), because these drives are built for speed rather than storage. Alas, Windows (or File) Explorer isn't as helpful as it might be when it comes to de-cluttering your files and folders, so here we'll show you the best free third-party tools for keeping your hard drive and external drives in good working order.

Identify the space hogs

New tool TreeSize Free (www.snipca.com/15900) reveals how much space is being taken up by every folder on your local hard drive (usually C:), including the stuff that doesn't show up in Windows Explorer. You can also use it to scan external hard drives and partitions as well as your local drive (see Best Free Software, Issue 445).

But the most powerful Explorer replacement is Disk Space Analyzer, which is built into Glary Utilities (www.snipca.com/15901). Click the big green Download Now button to get Glary's installer, which doesn't contain any adware. To open Disk Space Analyzer, run Glary, click Advanced Tools, then click the bottom one of two dots at the right of the program window. Under Disk Space on the left, click 'Explore disks' ('disk' is another word for drive). As with TreeSize, you can choose to examine both built-in and external drives. Glary will quickly come back with a clear breakdown of the drive space used by each folder (as percentages). Most of the space hogs will be in the Users folder.

Glary is great at identifying large folders of photos and videos, and you can filter your search according to types of file using the relevant tabs at the top of your scan results (see screenshot below left). If you find an unwanted folder you can delete it there and then, but don't delete anything you're unsure of, especially in the Windows folder.



Find out which folders are hogging your hard-drive space using the Disk Space Analyzer tool in Glary Utilities

Weed out duplicates and merge folders

It's very easy to end up with two or more folders containing lots of wasteful, duplicate files – maybe you've downloaded the same photos from a digital camera twice, for example.

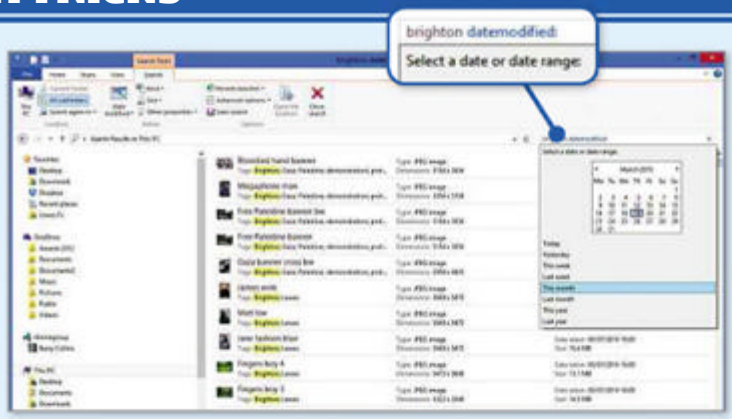
Open-source tool WinMerge (http://winmerge.org) is a simple way to tackle this problem. Click the green Download Now button (there's no adware to opt out of). When you run the program, click File, then Open and choose the first folder you suspect might contain duplicates (this will appear on the left) and then the second folder (this will appear on the right). WinMerge will scan them and reveal which files only appear in the left-hand or only in the right-hand folder, and which are exact copies. To clean up, click Edit, Select All and then right-click the files highlighted in blue. Choose 'Copy Left to Right' or 'Copy Right to Left', always moving to the folder that contains fewer files. All the files should now be in the target folder, meaning you can delete the other folder – but check that everything has been

WINDOWS EXPLORER SEARCH TRICKS

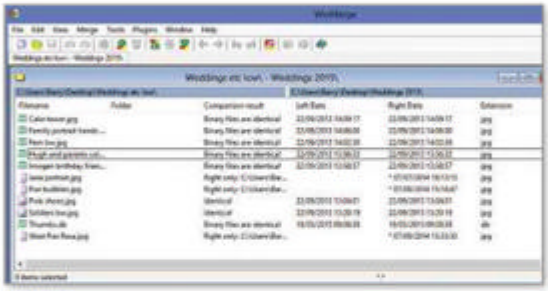
Windows Explorer may not be very good at helping you organise your files, but it does have some great hidden filtering tricks for searching files.

For instance, let's say you have a document called 'Club newsletter' that you edited last week, but now you can't find it. Type newsletter into the search box at the top right, then type datemodified: (including the colon). A little calendar will pop up, letting you narrow the search to this week, this month, this year or to a specific date.

Alternatively, type size to filter your search results according to size, or kind to sort according to file type. You can combine more than one of these filters to help you find what you're looking for.



Use search filters like 'datemodified:' in Explorer to find files or folders faster



Compare and merge the contents of two folders you suspect are duplicates using WinMerge

copied across safely first.

If you simply want to find and delete duplicate files, try Auslogics Duplicate File Finder (www.snipca.com/15902). The installer doesn't contain adware, but you should untick the offer of other Auslogics software. The program lets you target specific file types (photos, videos, documents and so on) or scan your entire hard drive. It also lets you ignore duplicates below a certain size. Once it has identified the duplicates, click the Select button, select all the duplicate files, then move them to the Recycle Bin.

Batch-edit file names and dates

If you've ever copied files from your digital camera to your computer, they probably arrived with unhelpful file names that are pretty useless should you ever try searching for them at a later date. The best free solution is Advanced Renamer (www.advancedrenamer.com), which comes in installable and portable versions.

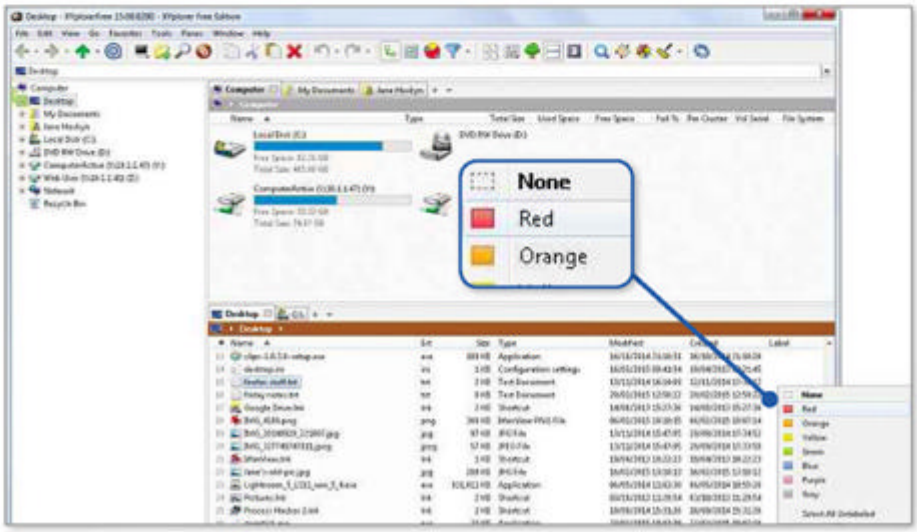
Run the program, click Add in the right-hand panel and select all the files you want to rename, then click Add Method and choose a renaming option. For example, to give them all the same name plus an incremental number, choose New Name, type a name (say, Crete Holiday) then choose 'Incremental numbers' from the tags below. Click Start Batch, then Start in the window that appears, and the files will be renamed 'Crete Holiday1', 'Crete Holiday2' and so on.

Free tool EXIF Date Changer (www.snipca.com/15903) lets you batch-edit file dates. This is handy if, for example, you'd forgotten to set the correct time on your camera and all last year's holiday photos think they were taken in 2007. If you use it, first go to the Options tab and untick Rename Files To – otherwise your files will be renamed as the date.

Colour-code your files and folders

One of the best ways to organise your files and folders is also one of the simplest – colour-code them. Folder Colorizer (www.snipca.com/15904 – scroll down to the Folder Colorizer and click Free Download) is a quick and simple tool for colouring specific folder icons to help them stand out in Explorer. The program is free, but make sure you click 'Custom installation' and untick Install 360 Total Security during installation. To colour a folder, right-click it in Explorer and click Colorize, then choose a default colour or mix your own using the Colors option at the bottom.

To colour-code your files, use XYplorerFree (www.snipca.com/15905). It lets you give each file a coloured label (for example, green for documents you've finished, red for 'to-do') so you can sort your work at a glance. The program is free and comes in installable and portable versions. Run either version, select a file, then click View, Columns and tick Label. Then, when you right-click in the empty space under Label to the right of the file, you can select a colour for that document. The file name is highlighted in your chosen colour. ca



Colour-code your files for easy sorting using XYplorerFree

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Problems Solved

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

How do I access Google Play from the Isle of Man?

Q I live on the Isle of Man (IoM), which limits the apps I can download from Google Play. The IoM is part of the British Isles but not part of the UK, which is apparently the problem. For many apps, such as BBC iPlayer, Google Play simply says: "This app is unavailable in your country". I assume that Google does not recognise IoM as part of Britain.

Carlton Mealin

Use a virtual private network to overcome geographic restrictions

A You're right that Google Play makes decisions based on location. It does this in a variety of ways, including the connected device's IP address – and this is likely to be the root cause of your problem.

There's only a finite number of IP addresses, which internet service providers (ISPs) are issued in blocks. Typically, your ISP's stock of IP addresses will reflect its geographical location (or at least the locations of its customers). However, some will hold stocks that don't reflect actual locations. An IoM IP address should work with Google Play but, even if your ISP is Manx Telecom, for example, there's no guarantee that it's issued you with an an IoM IP address.

Many domestic broadband connections are issued with dynamic IP addresses, which means the IP address changes from time to time. This could happen to a schedule decided by the ISP, or when you disconnect your router for a while. It's usually also possible to force your router to drop its current IP address and request a new one (though your ISP might well issue you the same one, until it decides it's time for a new one). To do this you'll need to access your router's admin page (typically by typing '192.168.0.1' or something similar into a web browser and pressing Enter), then look for the option to disconnect or reset your connection. You can also ask your ISP to issue you with a new IP address.

Alternatively, you could use a virtual private network (VPN) to make it look as though your Android device is connected via a UK-based server. Many VPN services are paid-for but free ones do exist, though they usually have restrictions – such as limits on streaming. That's no problem if you want to download apps, but if you then want to stream with BBC iPlayer you may need to consider a paid-for service.

To set up a VPN in Android (4.4 onwards), tap Settings followed by More and then VPN. Tap the '+' symbol then enter the details of your chosen VPN service. A service called Free UK VPN, for example, has the account name 'FREEUKVPN' (in capitals) and 'ukvpn.freeukvpn.co.uk' as the server address, so enter these details and tap Save. Now tap the new entry and enter the user name ('FREEUKVPN') and password: this changes regularly, but you can get it by visiting www.freeukvpn.co.uk.

Download your apps from Google Play then, to disconnect, return to the VPN screen, tap the FREEUKVPN entry and tap Disconnect.

Why can't I pay online using Microsoft Money?

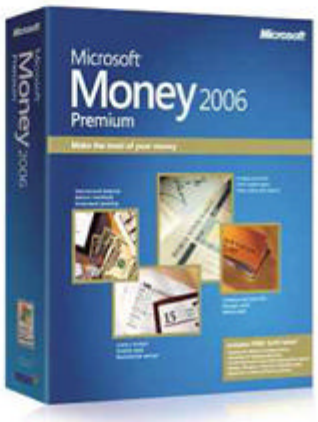
Q I use Microsoft Money to manage my personal banking. I've been trying to to set up scheduled transactions for my bank to pay bills. In the appropriate page I want to choose the Pay Online option, but this is always greyed out. The online option available on this page is 'Write Cheque'. Do you have any idea why this might be happening and how I can activate the Pay Online function? I'm using Windows 7.

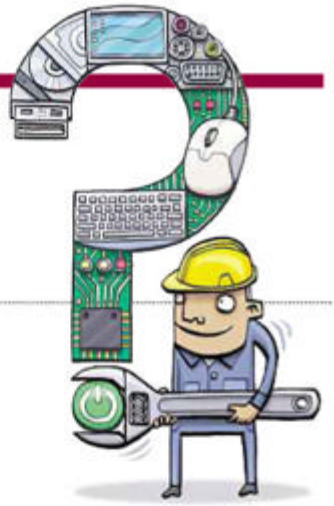
William Chalmers

A Yes, we can clarify things and it's not good news. Microsoft Money was discontinued in 2009, and all development of the program stopped in that year. Support actually continued until 2011 but, at that time, Microsoft effectively washed its hands of the product. It also switched off all the servers that enabled Money's online services.

The company did issue a 'sunset' edition of Money to allow people with old Money files to access their data. However, while this version of the program is still available as a free download (from www.snipca.com/15553) it has had all online features removed.

Sadly, for you there is no fix – and never will be. Money is an abandoned program and it is highly unlikely that Microsoft will ever revive it, and no chance at all that the company will ever reactive online functionality in the old versions.





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How do I move stuff from XP to Windows 8.1?

Q I'm going to buy a new PC because for the sake of security I feel it's time to retire my old Windows XP machine. I have my eye on a Windows 8.1 laptop, but I'm a bit worried about about some of the things I've read. I understand that Windows 8.1 is not compatible with the backup files produced by Windows XP? Is this true? If so, how am I supposed to move my personal files and folders from XP to my new computer? My backups are stored on an external hard drive. Also, how do I stop my old XP computer connecting to my Wi-Fi?

Jeremy Cook

Use free tool PCmover Express to transfer files from your old XP PC to a new Windows 8/8.1 computer

A Although it's almost unbelievable, we're afraid it's true that Windows 8.1 cannot read the files created by Windows XP's built-in backup tool. In fact, the same is true of Windows 7, but Microsoft did eventually release a tool that enabled people going from XP to Windows 7 to restore the files (with a .bkf file extension) created by XP's backup tool.

It's called 'Windows NT Backup - Restore Utility', and it's a free download from www.snipca.com/15575.

However, similarly unbelievably, that tool is not compatible with Windows 8.1 – so it's no help for people like you who want to jump from XP to 8.1. There is a way to get it to work by copying certain system files from your XP computer but there are still some problems using it.

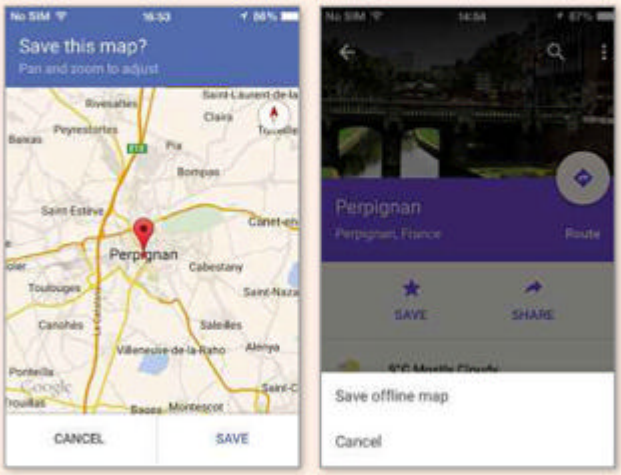
As you still have a working XP computer, it's better to use another solution. Perhaps realising the idiocy of this situation, Microsoft struck a deal with file-transfer veteran Laplink to give away a free copy of PCmover Express, which you can download from www.snipca.com/15576. Install this on both your XP and new Windows 8.1 PC and then, starting on the XP machine, work through the instructions to decide what data you want to transfer. The transfer can be handled wirelessly, via your Wi-Fi router (expect it to take a few hours though).

Finally, to disconnect your XP machine from Wi-Fi, first right-click the network icon in the notification area of the Taskbar (bottom right, basically) and choose Properties. Now click your network name then click the Disconnect button.

Can I use Google Maps offline with my iPhone?

Q I have had an account with Memory-Map (www.memory-map.co.uk) for years and have it licensed on a number of devices, including my handheld GPS and iPhone. I use it for walking and cycling. I also use it on my laptop with a GPS dongle. This is great for planning tours in the car, but I only have ordnance survey maps for GB and IGN maps in France. When it comes to Spain my scrolling map ends at the border. So, is there a way to download maps from Google Maps (or any other mapping software) that I can use in Spain without needing an internet connection?

John Ashe



Save maps for offline use on your iPhone in Google Maps

A The iPhone version of Google Maps makes it possible to store maps offline, limited to blocks of 50km square. To do this, first search for an area then, when its label appears at the bottom, swipe up then tap the menu button (three dots) followed by 'Save offline map'. Now pinch to zoom into the area and tap SAVE. Type a name then tap SAVE again. To call up saved maps, tap the app's main menu button (three lines), then tap 'Your places'.

We know of no current easy (or legal) way to save Google Maps data on a PC, because Google has changed the way the service works to make it difficult to do so. However, the free GMapCatcher program (www.snipca.com/15591) – which previously did the job for Google Maps – now lets you download maps from a variety of popular services, including Microsoft's Bing Maps (www.bing.com/maps) and the popular OpenStreetMap (www.openstreetmap.org).

Problems Solved

How do I remove Avast signature from my emails?

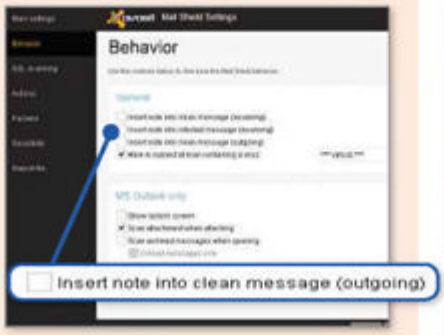
Q I read Keith Chessell's letter (Problems Solved, Issue 445) with some interest. My problem isn't the same as his, but it is related. Actually, it was your reply that highlighted my problem: Avast 2015 Free inserts its logo and accompanying marketing message into every email I send.

I understand the program is free but I'd rather not have this banner attached to my emails. Is this because the program is free? Is there any way of stopping this, or will I need to upgrade to the paid-for version to remove it? I use Windows Live Mail 2012 with Windows 7 Home Edition.

Eric Hammond

A You don't need to upgrade to the paid-for software to remove Avast's marketing signature, though the option to disable it is both thoroughly hidden and misleadingly named.

To begin, right-click the Avast icon in the notification area of the Windows Taskbar and choose 'Open Avast user interface'. Next, in the left-hand pane, click Settings followed by Active Protection. Now click the Customize link alongside Mail Shield, then Behavior in the left-hand pane. Finally, in the General section, clear the tick from the 'Insert note into clean message (outgoing)' box (see screenshot below). Click OK twice and the Avast signature will be history.

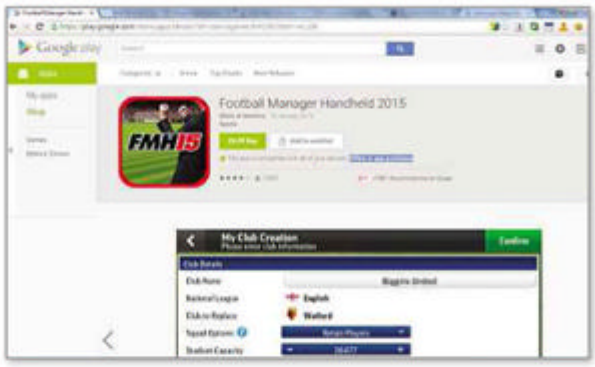


Ensure Avast doesn't leave signatures on your emails via its Behavior settings

What's the actual price of this Android app?

Q I've recently upgraded my Nexus 7 tablet to a 12.2-inch Galaxy Note Pro. Up until now I have refrained from giving Google my credit-card details, but recently I decided I'd like to put a couple of Android games on my tablet to go with all my music. Specifically, I want the Football Manager game, which I also play on my desktop PC. I don't mind paying the £6.99 demanded by Google Play Store, but on checking the details it said something about 'in-app charges', with a price range of 69p to £9.99. What are these? I never had extra charges on the desktop version of the game, and I don't want Google taking money from my account willy-nilly. So what are these charges? Fees for updates? Please help.

Martin Fletcher



Apps in the Google Play store, such as Football Manager Handheld, come with optional in-app purchases

A In-app purchases are precisely that: purchases that can be made within the app. So, in this case, the Football Manager app itself costs a fixed amount of £6.99. For that you'll be able to download and play the game, which by most accounts is a pretty faithful reproduction of its desktop counterpart.

However, the mobile version of Football Manager also offers extra stuff to buy inside the app, from extra challenges to an editing tool. It is to these that the published price range relates. You do not have to buy these to play the game, and will not be charged for them unless you choose to do so.

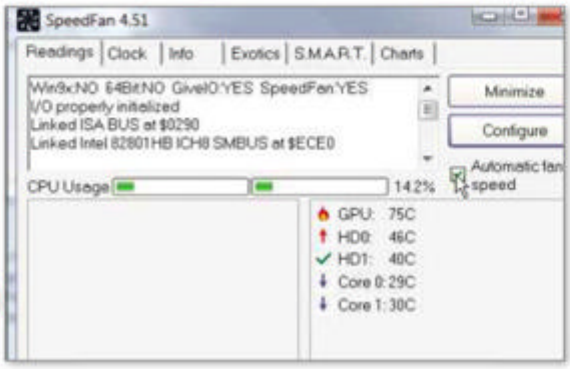
What's causing this sudden fan noise?

Q I followed your advice to clear the dust from inside my desktop PC. However, much to my horror, I was greeted with a horrendous noise coming mainly from the cabinet fan. What could I have possibly done? I have disconnected both fans to get some peace, but now I see an error message about them not being detected. Do I need to replace the fans?

John Kinchington

A Your PC needs fans, so reconnect them right away. It's possible that you have disturbed the blades on their spindles, causing them to wobble at speed. Try a little thumb pressure to reseat and stabilise them.

You could also try using the free SpeedFan tool (www.snipca.com/15603) to lower the fan speeds until the noise is acceptable. First, try ticking 'Automatic fan speed' on the Reading tab. If that doesn't work, click the Configure button, select the Fans tab, then select a Fan to manually lower its speed – but keep an eye on the temperatures on the Readings tab, and don't let them get too high.

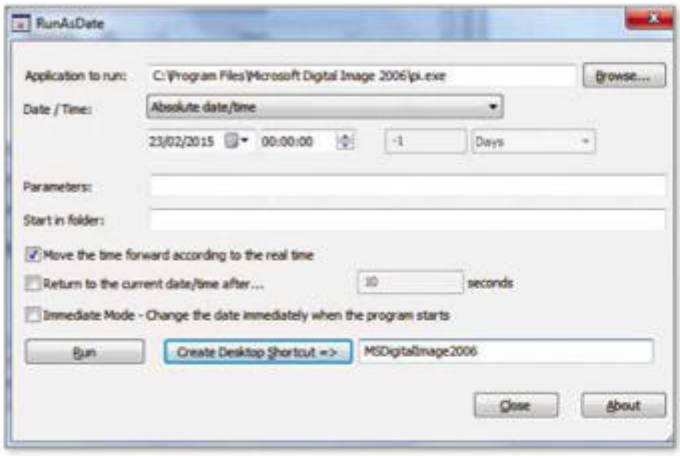


If your PC's fans are making a lot of noise, use the free tool SpeedFan to control how fast they rotate

Why doesn't RunAsDate do anything?

Q In Issue 442, you recommended a free program called RunAsDate (www.snipca.com/15069) to reset trial programs to their starting date. But there are no instructions. I browsed for the trial version of Microsoft Digital Image Starter Edition 2006, which is no longer available to buy so I couldn't upgrade to the full version anyway. I then clicked Run in RunAsDate and absolutely nothing happened. I clicked on Create Desktop Shortcut and again nothing happened. Could I be doing something wrong?

John Presland



Make sure you specify a program in RunAsDate and create a Desktop shortcut

A We tried RunAsDate with Digital Image Starter Edition (DISE) 2006 and it works as expected. So, we assume that you must've done something wrong. Or, more accurately, we reckon it's something you didn't do.

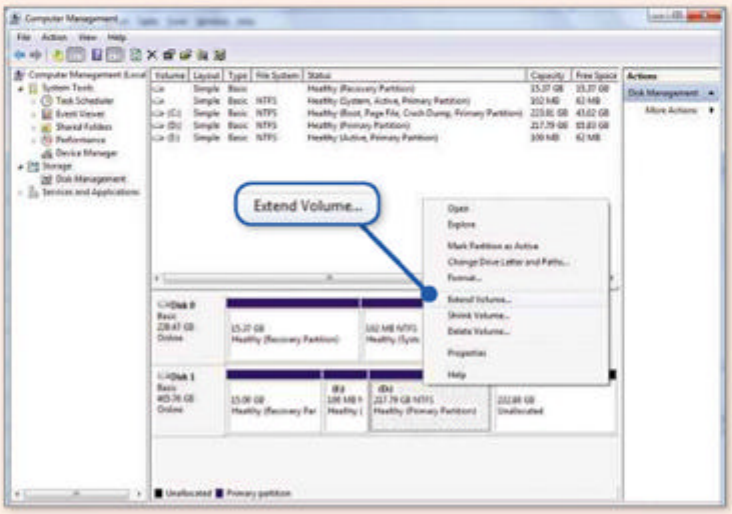
Clicking Run in RunAsDate won't do anything unless you've selected a program file on which the utility should work its magic. To make RunAsDate work with DISE 2006, click the Browse button and then navigate to the program's installation folder. Assuming you didn't change the default during installation, then this is C:\Program Files\Microsoft Digital Image 2006. Next, click to select 'pi.exe' (which is the relevant DISE 2006 program file) and choose Open. Click Run, and RunAsDate will do its job.

Incidentally, you might want to put a tick in the 'Return to the current date/time after' box, otherwise any date and time stamps you create in DISE 2006 will be inaccurate. If you want to create a Windows Desktop shortcut to speed things up for subsequent launches, first type a name for the shortcut (in the box next to the button – see screenshot), then click Create Desktop Shortcut.

How do I restore my missing 250GB partition?

Q I have a Maxtor 500GB external hard drive that, several years ago, I divided into two equal partitions by using EaseUS Partition Master. I've since uninstalled this program. Recently, I wanted to restore the drive to a single partition and used Paragon Partition Manager (free edition) to do this. Naively, I used the Delete Partition facility, which removed one of the partitions. However, I now find the capacity of my drive is only half of what it should be. What's happened and how can I restore the drive to its original 500GB? I run Windows 7 Home Premium.

Michael K Bell



Restore missing hard-drive space via Windows Computer Management tool

A What happened is that by deleting a partition you have created 'unallocated' space on your drive. Until this space is allocated, either by creating a new partition or 'extending' an existing partition to use the unallocated space, this part of your drive's storage will remain invisible to Windows.

Extending your existing (C:) partition into this unallocated space is easy with Windows 7, and you don't need extra software to do it. First, click Start then right-click Computer and choose Manage. Now click Storage followed by Disk Management. In the lower, right-hand pane, you'll see a list of all attached drives. In your case, you'll probably see 'Disk 0' and 'Disk 1' – with Disk 1 almost certainly the external drive. You can double-check by taking note of the capacities on the left-hand side, or by disconnecting and reconnecting the external drive.

Now right-click the existing working partition (with a blue banner), choose Extend Volume, click Next, accept the maximum amount for the extension, click Next and follow the prompts.

After a minute or two, your drive will have just one large partition – and your missing 250GB will be restored.

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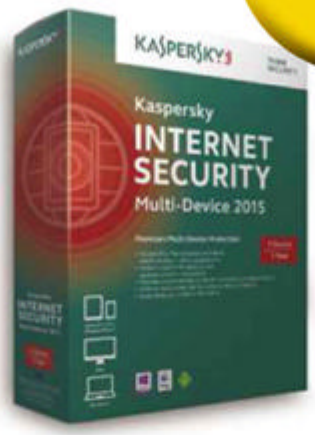

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Issue 415 22 January; Issue 425 11 June; Issue 430 20 August; Issue 437 26 November

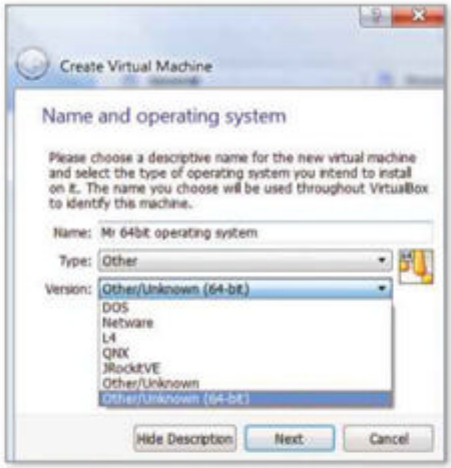
Why can't I run 64bit machines in VirtualBox?

Q I have a laptop running the 64bit edition of Windows 7, but I cannot get 64bit operating systems to run in VirtualBox – only their 32bit counterparts. Also, you recently published a SourceForge link to operating systems to use on VirtualBox. I downloaded the Android link, but it wouldn't run because the downloaded file was not ISO format. Please help.

M J Fordham

A To run a 64bit operating system in VirtualBox your computer must have a 64bit processor with built-in support for hardware virtualisation. We know your PC has a 64bit processor because you're running 64bit Windows and, while there are some 64bit processors that lack hardware-virtualisation capabilities, this isn't likely to be case for the Intel or AMD processor that's probably at the heart of your PC.

Most likely is that the relevant technology (Intel VT-x or AMD-V) is simply not enabled in your computer's BIOS. So, restart your PC, tap the necessary key to access the BIOS (typically Delete/Del or F2) and then scour the BIOS pages for an option called 'Virtualization Technology' (or something similar) and set it to Enabled.



When setting up a virtual machine make sure you select the correct version for your PC

Exit the BIOS, usually by pressing Escape (Esc), and save your changes. Finally, make sure when you set up a new virtual machine that you choose a 64bit operating system template from the Version dropdown menu.

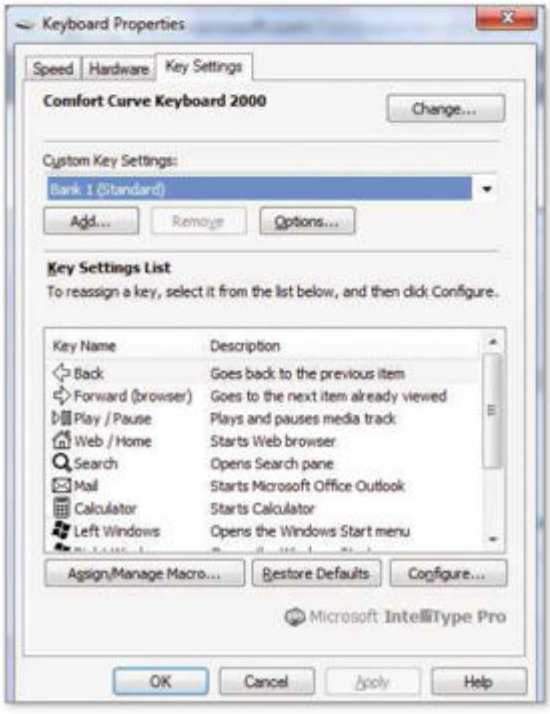
As for the Android virtual machine, we're assuming that you're talking about the popular Android-x86 project? The SourceForge page for this is www.snipca.com/15552 and clicking the green Download button in the middle of the page should download the ISO file.

If you're still struggling, try visiting the project's own home page, at www.android-x86.org. Click Download in the left-hand side pane then, in the right-hand pane, scroll down to the 'Android-x86-4.4' section and click the View link next to the 'Android-x86 4.4-r1 live & installation iso' entry: this redirects you to SourceForge, but the download will begin right away, removing the potential for you to click the wrong download button.

Why does my keyboard type duplicate characters?

Q I have a self-built 64bit Windows 7 PC that works well except for one problem. In some programs (but not all), my keyboard duplicates characters. Even typing this email required 15 or more deletions! I've accessed Keyboard Properties via Control Panel and set both 'Repeat delay' and 'Repeat rate' to their minimum positions, but it hasn't helped. It's a Microsoft Internet Keyboard connected through a KVM (keyboard-video-mouse) switch, and it works perfectly on my old Windows 98 PC.

Shane McLaughlin



If tweaking your Keyboard properties fails to resolve typing problems check your KVM switch and cables

A There are numerous possible causes for this, but we suspect your KVM switch is to blame. In the first instance we'd suggest removing it from your setup to see if that helps.

If the problem is resolved, reconnect the KVM but try reversing the connections (that is, swap the connections to the Windows 98 computer with the Windows 7 PC). If this also fixes the problem then there's a fault with one half of your KVM's connections. Buy a replacement, because a new model would be cheaper than a repair.

Next, download and install Microsoft's free IntelliType Pro tool, from www.snipca.com/15421 – this will ensure the drivers are the perfect match for your keyboard model.

Finally, it's possible that a bug in your motherboard's USB controller is causing this problem. Because yours is a self-built PC, there won't be any automated-update tools installed (other than Windows, obviously), so visit your motherboard manufacturer's website to see if there's a firmware update. Methods vary so we can't tell you how to apply this – simply follow the manufacturer's instructions.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 29 Apr

- How do I wipe down my old PCs?
- Why does Word launch with gibberish?
- How do I add repeat reminders in Android?

...And many more

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Word

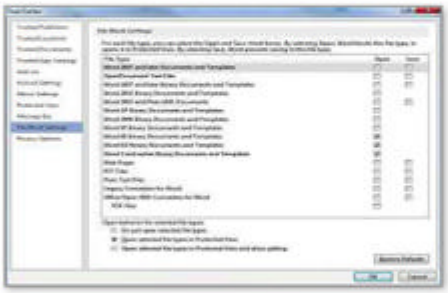
Open documents that won't open, find lost footnotes and fix corrupted fonts

Some documents won't open

If you see an error message when you attempt to open an older document, it might be because Word is set to block files it considers unsafe – which can include documents created by older versions of the program.

To fix this, click File followed by Word Options (2013) or, if you're running Word 2010, click File, Help, then Options. Now click Trust Center, then File Block Settings. Untick the blocked file types you'd like to open, then click OK.

Doing the same in Word 2007 requires a Registry tweak that Microsoft has made available as a free 'Fix it' tool (www.snipca.com/15740).

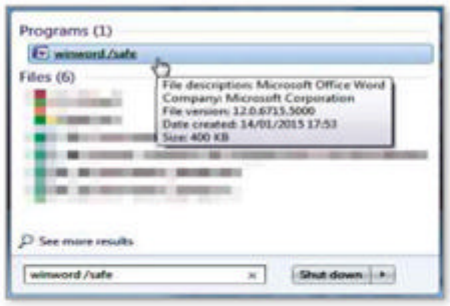


If Word refuses to open some document types, tweak the options in File Block Settings

Word won't open

If you can't get Word to open at all, it's probably due to faulty add-ins (Microsoft's term for extensions for Office programs). The answer is to disable or reinstall the broken add-in – but that's easier said than done if you can't load Word. So, start by launching Word in its own safe mode. Click Start, type winword.exe /safe and press Enter. Word might look or act a bit different, but don't worry – this is because all your add-ins have been disabled.

You now need to work methodically, disabling one add-in at a time before restarting Word to see if the problem is fixed. Click File, Word Options and then 'Add-ins'. Select 'COM Add-ins' from the Manage dropdown menu. Clear a tick from one add-in and click OK, then start Word as normal (not in safe mode). If it fails, repeat this entire tip with a different add-in. When you find the offending add-in, leave it disabled or reinstall it.



When Word won't launch, use safe mode to diagnose and fix the problem

Footnotes have disappeared

In older versions of Word, footnotes were always visible in the program's Normal or Print Layout views, but this changed with Word 2010. It's now less easy to see footnotes at a glance, and much less obvious how to edit footnotes in groups.

To fix the first problem, select the References tab and then click Show Notes (in the Footnotes group). Then, to view or edit all your footnotes in one place, choose the View tab and then click Draft in the Views group.

Spell-checker doesn't work

Word 2010 and 2013 have both a traditional spell-checker – where an entire document is checked in one run-through – and a live system that underlines errors in red as you type. If these aren't working, or aren't working as you'd expect, then try this. Select the Review tab, then choose Language in the Language group followed by Set Proofing Language. First, make sure that your preferred language is selected. If it isn't, select it and then click the Set As Default button. Next, check the 'Do not check spelling or grammar' box. If it's clear, Word will not check your spelling as you type – so if that's what you want it to do, tick the box.

Make sure Word's spell-checker is using the correct language and set to check as you type

Can't change Recent Places in Word 2010

When you click File in Word 2010 and 2013, you see a box containing a list of Recent Documents (just like in previous versions of Word) and Recent Places (such as folders you've recently saved documents to). Normally you can change how many Recent Places are shown by clicking File, Options, Advanced and then changing the figure in the Display section.

However, there's a bug in Word 2010 that can stop this from working. You can fix it by editing the Registry via Registry Editor, but it's easier to download Microsoft's free 'Fix it' tool (www.snipca.com/15743).

Word displays an 'Invalid Page' error

If you see an error message about an 'Invalid Page' when you try to open a document in any version of Word, it's probably because some fonts are missing or corrupted.

You can fix it in the same way in any version. Press Shift+F1 to open the Reveal Formatting pane, then step through the document with the text cursor, noting down the fonts used. Now click Start followed by Control Panel, then click 'Appearance and Personalization' followed by Fonts. Check that all the listed fonts are present. If any are missing, you'll need to install them. Otherwise, start a new, clean document, type some text and format it with the first font on your list. Save, close Word, then restart and open the document just created. Change the font and repeat until the Invalid Page error appears. Re-install the corrupted fault, or stop using it.

Next issue Fast Fixes for... Your PC display

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T050 Black	£32.99 15ml	£2.99 19ml, 3 for £7.99	440, 640, 660 Photo 700, 1200
T051 Black	£36.99 24ml	£2.99 28ml, 3 for £7.99	740, 760, 800, 850, 860, 1160
T052 Colour	£36.99 35ml	£3.99 39ml, 3 for £10.99	440, 640, 660, 740, 760, 1160
T053 Colour	£26.99 43ml	£3.99 48ml, 3 for £10.99	Photo 700, 750
T0441-4 Set of 4	£44.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	C84, C86, C84, C86,
T0441 Black	£19.99 13ml	£4.99 13ml, 3 for £13.99	CX3600/3650, CX6400, 8600
T0452-4 each	£9.99 8ml	£3.99 13ml, 3 for £10.99	
T0481-6 Set of 6	£69.99	£19.99, 3 sets for £57.99	R200, R220, R300, R320, R340
T0481-6 each	£15.99 13ml	£3.99 13ml, 3 for £10.99	RX500, RX600, RX620, RX640
T0540-9 Set of 8	£109.99	£35.99, 3 sets for £99.99	Photo R800, R1800
T0540 Gloss	£8.99 13ml	£3.99 21ml, 3 for £13.99	
T0541-9 each	£14.99 13ml	£4.99 21ml, 3 for £13.99	
T0551-4 Set of 4	£34.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	Photo R240, R245
T0551 Black	£8.99 8ml	£4.99 8ml, 3 for £10.99	RX420, RX425, RX520, RX525
T0552-4 each	£8.99 8ml	£3.99 8ml, 3 for £10.99	
T0591-9 Set of 8	£99.99	Check Website.	Photo R2400
T0591-9 each	£12.99 13ml	Check Website.	
T0611-4 Set of 4	£34.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	D68, D68
T0611 Black	£8.99 8ml	£4.99 8ml, 3 for £13.99	DX3800/3850, DX4200/4250
T0612-4 each	£8.99 8ml	£3.99 8ml, 3 for £10.99	DX4800/4850
T0711-4 Set of 4	£34.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	S22, SX125, SX130, SX235W,
T0711 Black	£8.99 7.4ml	£4.99 7.4ml, 3 for £13.99	SX420W/425W/435W/445W,
T0711-4 each	£8.99 5.6ml	£3.99 7.4ml, 3 for £10.99	DX4000/4005/5000/6000/7400/8400
T0791-6 Set of 6	£74.99	Check Website.	Photo 1400
T0791-6 each	£12.99 10ml	Check Website.	
T0801-6 Set of 6	£51.99	£19.99, 3 sets for £57.99	P50, R265/285/360, RX560/585
T0801-6 each	£8.99 7.4ml	£3.99 7.4ml, 3 for £10.99	/585/650, PX700/710/800/810
T0870-9 Set of 8	£74.99	Check Website.	Photo R1900
T0870 Gloss	£7.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	
T0871-9 each	£9.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	
T0961-9 Set of 8	£74.99	Check Website.	Photo R2880
T0961-9 each	£9.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	
T1281-4 Set of 4	£29.99	£14.99	S22, SX125, SX130, SX235W,
T1281 Black	£7.99 6.9ml	£4.99 6.9ml	SX420W/425W/435W/445W,
T1282-4 each	£7.99 3.5ml	£3.99 3.5ml	BX305F
T1291-4 Set of 4	£42.99	£16.99	SX25W/420W/425W/435W/445W,
T1291 Black	£10.99 11ml	£5.49 11ml	SX525WD/535WD/620FW, BX2WD,
T1292-4 each	£10.99 7ml	£4.49 7ml	BX305F/320FW/525WD/625FWD
T1571-9 each	£20.99 25ml	Check Website.	R3000
T1591-9 each	£14.99 17ml	Check Website.	R2000
T5801-9 each	£41.99 80ml	Check Website.	Pro 3800, 3880
No.16 Set of 4	£24.99	£14.99	Workforce WF-2010W, 2510WF,
No.16 Black	£6.99 5.4ml	£4.99 5.4ml	2520NF, 2530WF, 2540WF
No.16 C/M/Y, each	£5.99 3.1ml	£3.99 3.1ml	
No.18 Set of 4	£22.99	£14.99	Expression Home XP30,
No.18 Black	£6.99 5.2ml	£4.99 5.2ml	XP102, 202, 205
No.18 C/M/Y, each	£5.99 3.3ml	£3.99 3.3ml	XP302, 305, 402, 405
No.24 Set of 6	£44.99	No.24XL Set of 6 £69.99	Expression Photo XP750, 850
No.24 B/LC/LM, ea	£7.99 5.1ml	No.24XL B/LC/LM, ea £11.99 8.5ml	
No.24 C/M/Y, each	£7.99 4.6ml	No.24XL C/M/Y, each £11.99 8.7ml	
No.26 Set of 4	£30.99	No.26XL Set of 4 £54.99	Expression Premium XP600, 605, XP700, 800
No.26 Black	£8.99 6.2ml	No.26XL Black £14.99 12.1ml	
No.26 Photo Black	£7.99 4.7ml	No.26XL Photo Black £13.99 8.7ml	
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3	plusnet	Plusnet: Broadband & Calls	£9.99 (£2.50 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£30.00
4	sky	Sky: Broadband & Calls	£7.50 (HALF PRICE for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£45.00
5	Virgin media	Virgin: Broadband & Calls	£17.50 (HALF PRICE for 12 months)	18 months	50Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	£105.00
6	TalkTalk	TalkTalk Fibre Broadband	£13.50 (£5 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£111.00
7	plusnet	Plusnet: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£14.99 (£3.75 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£112.44
8	sky	Sky: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£20.00 (HALF PRICE for 12 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£120.00
9	EE	EE: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£19.95 (£9.95 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£179.40
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Jargon Buster

1080p Of the common types of high-definition video, this is the best quality: 1920x1080 pixels.

32bit A measure of how much information a PC can process at once. Most older PCs are 32bit.

64bit A technology that processes information in larger chunks. Most modern computers are 64bit.

802.11ac A standard for wireless networks that allows for higher transfer speeds than 802.11n.

ADF Automatic Document Feeder. A device that feeds sheets of paper into a photocopier or scanner, one at a time.

Aperture An opening that controls the amount of light entering a camera lens.

Aspect ratio A measurement of the shape of a display. Traditional PC screens are 4:3. Widescreen displays are 16:9 or 16:10.

Bandwidth A measure of how much data can be transferred through a connection at one time.

BIOS Basic Input-Output System. Software built into every PC that connects the vital components.

Bookmarklet A small, very simple program stored as a bookmark in your web browser.

Cookie A small text file stored on your computer by a website. Used to store browsing preferences, website login details and so on.

CSC Compact system cameras. A camera that uses interchangeable lenses, but doesn't have a viewfinder that uses a mirror.

Disk image A file that contains all the information from a CD or DVD. Sometimes known as an ISO.

dpi Dots per inch. A measure of printed image quality, or the size an object will be shown on screen.

Dual band Wi-Fi routers with two wireless radios working on the 2.4 and 5GHz frequencies.

Duplex printing Printing on both sides of a sheet of paper.

DVI Digital Visual Interface. A common type of display connector.

Eight-core A PC that has eight processors on a single chip.

EPUB A file format used by many popular ebook readers.

Equaliser An equaliser changes the tone of music produced by a computer or portable player.

Ethernet A standard used for almost all wired PC networks.

EXE A program file designed to run in Windows.

Exposure The amount of light collected by a camera's sensor.

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Extension A program that adds extra features to your browser.

False positive When an antivirus program wrongly detects a malware infection.

Feedback The tactile response that the keys on a keyboard give when they've been pressed.

Firmware Basic software stored on a device, such as a music player, to control its operation.

Flash memory A type of memory that can retain information without a power source.

HDMI High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

ISO file A type of image file that contains all the data from a CD or DVD disc.

ISO The light sensitivity of a camera. A high ISO lets you shoot in the dark without a flash.

Megapixel A measure of the amount of detail that can be recorded by a digital image.

MFP Multifunction Printer. A combined printer and scanner.

MicroSD card A small type of memory card.

Motherboard The main circuit board inside every PC into which all other parts connect.

MP4 A type of digital movie file often used for portable players.

NFC Near-field communication.

Noise Visible dust-like speckles that appear in some images.

Open source Software that can be modified by anyone.

Partition A large hard drive can be split into two or more partitions or 'virtual' drives.

Plug-in A small program that adds extra features to your web browser or to other applications, and is loaded only when it's needed.

Processor The processor – or central processing unit – is the brain of a computer.

Quad core A PC that has four processors on a single chip.

RAW A format for digital photos that stores the image exactly as the camera captured it.

Remote code execution When a hacker is able to start a program running on a remote computer.

Resolution The amount of detail shown in an image.

Restore points The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date and time to which Windows can revert.

SATA Serial Advanced Technology Attachment.

Sensor The part of the camera that captures each image.

Server A PC on a network that distributes data to other PCs.

Shutter speed A way of measuring how much light is captured by a camera's sensor.

SIM-only A mobile phone contract in which the network provider supplies the SIM, an agreed amount of usage, but not the phone.

SLR Single-Lens Reflex.

SSD Solid-state drive.

Time-shift Recording a TV programme for later viewing.

Travel The distance the keys of a keyboard have to be pressed before the keystroke is recognised.

USB 2.0 Faster successor to USB.

USB 3.0 A even faster version of the USB standard.

VCD Video Compact Disc.

Virtual machines A software-based computer running inside another computer.

VGA Video Graphics Array.

White balance Adjusts the balance of colours in an image.

Widget A small program that runs on the Windows Desktop.

Bust more jargon on our Back Issue CD: www.snipca.com/14981

The Final Straw

STUART ANDREWS is *Computeractive*'s Mr Angry

This issue Stuart Andrews has no one to blame but. . .

Himself

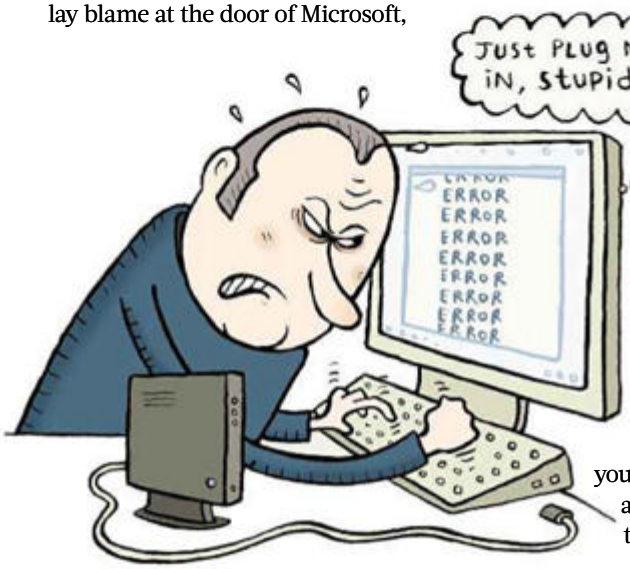
Last year my laptop refused to connect to the internet. It had a healthy wireless signal to the router, but a little yellow exclamation mark meant I wouldn't be Googling any time soon. I picked up my trusty Android tablet and found that it too had come over all disconnected. So I marched into the living room and examined the router. Sure enough, the ADSL indicator glowed the kind of muted, passive-aggressive red that says 'You've got a problem'.

I turned the power on and off – to no avail. I checked the connections at the back, but nothing seemed amiss. I fired up my browser and checked the router set-up screen, still nothing untoward. And then, just as I was explaining sarcastically to my ISP's tech support that, yes, of course I'd switched the router off and on, and, yes, of course I'd checked the connections, I noticed that the cable between the router and the ASDL splitter had been knocked out. In a split second, I went from irritated expert to red-faced, blithering, overly apologetic fool.

We often blame hardware and software for so many of the problems we suffer with our devices, but how much actually comes down to us? Much as I'm happy to lay blame at the door of Microsoft, Google and Apple when things go pear-shaped, I'd have to admit that it's sometimes the result of my own ineptitude. I've tested PC monitors that have left me cursing blank screens, only to read the manual and learn there's a power switch beneath the frame. I was about to return a non-functioning

> I was ready to return a non-working smartphone when I realised that I'd slotted the battery in upside down

smartphone, only to realise I'd slotted the battery in upside down. On more than one occasion I've complained that a printer or scanner was a worthless piece of scrap (especially when the USB cable hadn't been plugged in). And like anything with a human brain, I forget usernames and passwords.



Software errors can also be down to human error (or at the very least a failure to read what's on screen). You haven't got a leg to stand on if JPEGs no longer open in your favourite image editor after you've installed some dodgy photo app and said 'yes' when it asks to hijack all your permissions.

Hooray for the selfie sticks ban!

So, the National Gallery has banned the selfie stick "in order to protect paintings, individual privacy and the overall visitor experience". Good. As I said a few months ago (in Issue 441 to be exact), the selfie stick has transformed the already irritating self-portrait mode into a genuine public menace, where you're in danger of a good whacking or prodding if you're within spitting distance of some famous landmark or other. What these halfwits thought they were doing, posing in front of *The Hay Wain* or Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* (URL????) boggles the mind, but at least we no longer have to put up with them waving their smartphones on stalks in the air.

I've also got little sympathy for those who get hit by malware because they disabled Windows Update and removed their antivirus software because their prompts had become intrusive and intolerable.

Things used to be worse. The more streamlined and restrictive computers get, the more idiot-proof they become. You no longer get a CD-ROM drive you can mistake for a coffee cup holder, and long gone are the days when you might try to fold a 5.25in floppy disc into a 3.5in floppy drive.

Manufacturers and software developers have got smarter, and their testing is more geared toward identifying those areas where we can royally mess things up. They don't always get it right, and bugs and errors keep on coming, but our tech is getting easier to use. So next time you let rip at at some flashing light or error message, stop and check: are you sure it's not a mess of your own making?

Have you made similar mistakes? Let us know at letters@computeractive.co.uk

Next issue Stuart mans the barricades against mob rule online

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